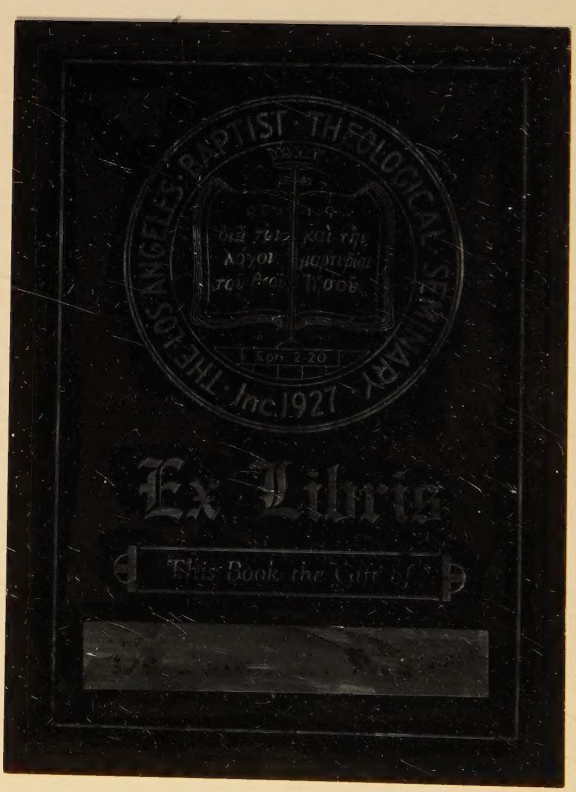
STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN FAITH

CHRISTIANITY FOR TO-DAY

JOHN GODFREY HILL, Ph.D.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STUDIES IN CHRISTIAN FAITH

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Christianity for To-day

A Brief Study of Our Christian Faith

By

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Approved by the Committee on Curriculum of the Board of Sunday Schools of the Methodist Episcopal Church

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FOREWORD

THIS book is especially intended to help our many devoted but busy Sunday-school teachers, church workers, and all earnest seekers after light who desire to know what intelligent Christians commonly think to-day on matters of our Christian faith. The effort has been to set down in clear, simple language only such matters in our Christian faith as are of most vital concern to that challenging host of young men and women who crave to know what they can believe about the Christian religion and why they should believe it.

Grateful acknowledgment is made to many friends for valuable assistance rendered in the making of this little volume, more especially to the three young student friends—Alice Ralph, Lydia Glover, and Ruth Parsons—who have assisted untiringly in numerous details.

J. G. H.

CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF RELIGION

In the war novel entitled *Mr. Britling Sees It Through,* H. G. Wells, the author, comments upon the war correspondence carried on by young Hugh Britling and his father, and reflects as follows: "Once or twice, with a half-conscious imitation of his boy's style, he took a shot at the theological and philosophical hares that Hugh had started. . . . There are many things of that sort that are good to think and hard to say."[1]

Most people who think like, once in a while, to "take a shot" at "theological and philosophical hares." We will go gunning after "things of that sort." The mind at its best is intensely devoted to the task of making beliefs. Creeds are more than "parson's talk": they are attempts at charting religious experiences. In all religious life there is therefore some thinking, and theologies are the orderly statements of religious ideas. While there is an evident popular dislike for dogma, there appears to be an eager desire for a simple and clear statement of fundamental matters of our Christian faith.

Our thought world is a very real world; for our life is a thinking, and every man has his working theory of existence. Consequently, beliefs are as necessary as fingers and toes. Each one of us will have some kind of a world view. Skepticism often unnerves men for the nobler adventures of life. Chronic doubt is a deterrent. Belief is a spur to adventure. There is therefore not only "an incontestable need of religion"[2] but also some need for clear thinking about religion.

The Religious Consciousness

So long as men think about the world in which they live they will construct beliefs concerning it. Life itself

[1] *Mr. Britling Sees It Through,* H. G. Wells. The Macmillan Company.
[2] A. C. Knudson in a lecture delivered at the University of Southern California, July, 1922.

outruns knowledge. Limitation of knowledge makes room for beliefs. To believe in the spiritual world is just as natural as to believe in the material world; for we live in both, believe in both, crave solutions of them, and form theories about them.

The religious impulse.—Our most immediate experience gives us hints of a "beyond." The day's living elbows us out into the "something more." The mind has a way of outrunning time and space and experienced facts, and the pressure of something more than visible things seems to impel us to seek the ideal reality of all things.

We know ourselves at once as beings of two worlds. We often imagine that we are bound hand and foot to this material world of time and space, food and fabrics; but within us there is another world—a spiritual world that lifts us above the animal, a world swarming with ideas, beliefs, loves, sentiments, worships, sweeping through the spaces of the soul as air through the lungs and as light through the eyes. This deeper world of our aspiration in which our better selves would move is none other than the spiritual world. It is in that world that our ideal beliefs rest. These beliefs are governing factors in all of us, for we do have such beliefs because our human nature has a skyward bent. There is an upward trend in human nature which struggles toward the heights of a better life. The best of our inner self pushes back into the ideal, nonmaterial world, where the divine Spirit meets the human spirit.

Is not this the inner presence of the unseen world? In that direction is to be found and experienced the great Friend of the universe. This inner urge of human nature we recognize as our religious impulse that is ours by birthright. All human religious striving starts from this inborn tendency.

The history of religion affords a vast amount of evidence from many and widely scattered sources testifying that man has a religious impulse out of which has sprung all the religions of the world.

The God-consciousness.—Certain it is that man believes himself impressed from an invisible source. He craves contact with it and seeks after it and feels its friendly

touch. The religions of the world bear witness to this fact. "Why am I religious?" asked Sabatier, the French scholar. He hastened to answer his own question thus: "Because I cannot help it: it is a moral necessity of my being."[3] The higher our mental life moves, and the richer our religious experiences become, the surer we seem to be that our consciousness is fed by Another's, whose mysterious force pours into our own.

Even in man's instinctive struggle for food, which seems to be so far removed from anything spiritual, he is conscious of a Power that provides and he craves to know and have contact with this Being. Practically all religions give large place to prayer for food and drink, and many offer up foodstuffs as pleasing to the deity. Even in the model prayer for Christians we have the expression: "Give us this day our daily bread."

Psychology may speak of such experiences as "subconscious uprisings" or "mysteries of the subliminal self." No matter how they are described, the fact is the same—that some power, not our own, is at work, stimulating the soul to reach after the invisible Helper. There is in every normal person a kind of God-consciousness, which seeks positive connection and friendly relation with the unseen Friend.

Because of this conviction within him man must have a religion: he will make his ritual, build his temples, offer his gifts, declare his beliefs, and cling to his dogmas. Hence, the quest after God is as pressing as the search for food. In our innermost selves do we find the immediate and pressing desire to undertake the climb to God.

Even H. G. Wells, who is regarded as far from Christian in his religious outlook, bears impressive testimony of his own mystic moments of divine contacts as follows: "Suddenly, in his own time, God comes. This cardinal experience is an undoubting, immediate sense of God. It is the attainment of an absolute certainty that one is not alone in oneself. It is as if one were touched at every point by a being akin to oneself, sympathetic beyond measure, wise, steadfast, and pure in aim."[4] The "feeling of

[3] *Outlines of a Philosophy of Religion*, page 3.
[4] *God, the Invisible King*, The Macmillan Company, page 23.

wonder," Plato called it.[5] William James spoke of it as our "overbeliefs."[6] Macintosh goes so far as to argue that "God is a direct object of experience and manifests himself immediately to consciousness."[7] The lay mind is no less conscious of the great Presence in common life. The men who fought at the front in the World War have spoken often of their experiences with the "Comrade in white."

Such mystical experience is very widespread and is witnessed to in all religious faiths. But experience of the "invisible King" is capable of justifying any world view and of subscribing to any particular set of beliefs; and, therefore, such experiences are common in all forms of religion without proving the truth of any particular intellectual theory concerning them. In other words, religious experiences are primary; views of religion based upon them are secondary. Man is God-conscious.

The Making of Religion

It is sometimes smartly asked, "Did God make man, or did man make God?" Likewise it is asked, "Is religion man-made or God-revealed?" Perhaps it is well to answer that it is both. While man is the builder, God is the Architect. At any rate, we may inquire about the origin, the development, and the goal of religion. But, first of all, what do we understand by the term "religion"? It will be sufficient for our purpose to define it as that common human attitude toward, a craving for relationship with, and a sense of dependence on a Supreme Being or Beings.

The origin of religion.—There is an original religious bent in human nature. The origin of religion is planted in human nature itself. Thus religion began to be when man became what he is by nature. The immediate and experienced fact of religion is then in ourselves. As we have seen, there is the unfailing religious impulse to find God, to seek moral recovery, to feel secure in the midst of a titanic world from all evil and overpowering forces.

[5] *Journal of Religion*, July, 1922, page 362.
[6] *Ibid.*, page 375.
[7] *Ibid.*, page 376.

In the general tendencies of our inner powers and capacities we find what Pratt defines as the "attitude of a self toward an object in which the self genuinely believes."[8]

There is, in the second place, the natural attempt at idealizing our human values and universalizing them into social worth—values dear to the whole group and finally thought to be dear to the Power that determines our destiny. Hence, "religion," says Harrison, "sums and embodies what we feel together, what we care for together, what we imagine together."[9]

The origin of religion, in the third place, is never to be found in the earliest manifestations of it among primitive men. A study of early appearances of crude religious forms in no way accounts for religion any more than early crude scratches on the rocks account for art in the world.

Many attempts there have been to make early religious forms and manifestations explain religion, whereas the fact is that religion explains the forms. Thus, the instincts of fear, self-preservation, group life, have been cited as the sources of the religious life. They can, however, at most, be taken only as *some* of the *many* factors that enter into human nature out of which the religious attitude and belief spring.

Others have attempted to prove that religion sprang from the dreams of primitive man, who looked upon his dream experiences as actually real. Hence, it is supposed by some that the superior persons of his dreams were looked upon and came to be worshiped as gods. The sufficient answer is that before dreams or imaginations can have religious meaning, there must be the religious impulse. This throws us back once more upon the kind of human nature which can account in a religious way for the origin of religion.

Still others have asserted that priests have invented religion in an attempt to control the ignorant masses. This theory would be unworthy of notice except for the fact that large groups still seem to believe in it. One must first account for religious priests who could invent so much and then for the fact that the masses heed and fol-

[8] *The Religious Consciousness*, page 3.
[9] *The Reconstruction of Religion*, Ellwood, page 42, footnote.

low them. That again suggests the religious bent in man to start it going, to say nothing of keeping it going throughout human history.

The Fashioner of human nature must be credited, in the last analysis, with the origin of religion as part of the system of things. God gave rise to religion when he made a being endowed with the religious impulse. We have religious faiths because we are religiously inclined. Consequently, it is as natural for man to pray as to play, to worship as to work. Thus man shares in the very life and nature of the great Friend of the Universe, for he is built upon the pattern eternal.

The growth of religion.—Religion is a growing concern. Like all other human activities and processes religion has had a crude and humble beginning, a long struggle to make the climb. The history of religion among various races of men shows clearly marked stages of development. At a certain stage, for example, religion was belief in a "mysterious wonder-working energy" manifest in exceptional persons and things; then followed the stage of "animism"—the religion of "spirits" who were able to exist apart from the objects in which they were thought to reside; "totemism"—the stage of plant and animal worship; the stage of "ancestor worship," in which the great dead had power to help or hinder the living; "polytheism"—the worship of many gods; "henotheism"—the stage in which one of the many gods became supreme above the rest; "monotheism"—the religion of the one God for the whole world; and, at length, the religion of Jesus, for whom God is a loving, perfect Father—the religion of the spirit.

The religious development of the race shows that religion has gradually evolved with the general growth of civilization. Religious ideas change with the mental, social, and cultural advance of mankind. Thus, in a sense, it may be said that God comes to consciousness in human experience by a long process of development through the slowly passing ages.

Hence, the different religious faiths that have made their historic record along the stormy centuries mark important stages in the growth of religion.

This brief and imperfect historic survey reveals how imperfect were religious belief and practice in the earliest beginnings. On the other hand, it reveals how marvelous has been the development in religion from the mud gods of the Nile to the Spirit-God of Jesus. These differences, then and now, are well-nigh measureless in moral quality and spiritual reach. Religion has come a long way on its journey upward. For the Christian it is difficult to think of a religion more perfect than that founded by Jesus.

The story of the development of ceremonies, the evolution of duties, the rise and fall of sacrifices, the varied character of prayers, the purifying ideas of the "eternal King," and the formulation of moral ideals is the story of a long "muddling through" from the motive of fear to love, from the idea of many gods to the one God, from the law of retaliation to the law of good will, and from bloody sacrifices to the sacrificial service.

The goal of religion.—What does religion attempt to do? Whither is it bound? What can it do that is not possible without its aid? These are questions that press hot upon the lips of earnest but perplexed men and women of our time.

Since religion has entered into the tangled fabric of every civilization known to history, sometimes weakening and sometimes strengthening the fabric, it is well to inquire into its purpose; for there are those who believe that man can get on without its help. "Religion," says Bury, "is gradually becoming less indispensable."[10]

Man still needs divine help as much as his ancestors ever did in ages gone by. Man still needs help to find himself, to keep himself steady, to inspire and lift his soul above the commonplace of life, to redeem himself from his evil tendencies, and to point his way to the great Friend. Just these services religion renders. It aims to brace the feelings, control the passions, restrain the appetites, steady the reason, and stiffen the courage to perform deeds far beyond the ordinary level of life.

Religion, in whatever form, attempts to harmonize man's life with an ideal that brings him into favor with the whole of existence; and, in the nobler religions, brings

[10] *History of Freedom of Thought*, page 229.

him face to face with the triumphant spiritual order. Hence, "a man's religion," says Caird, "is the expression of ultimate attitude to the universe, the summed-up meaning and purpose of his whole consciousness of things."[11] That is, the primary function of religion really is and always has been to set before men the highest values of life; and, in the name and strength of Deity, to get them committed to these high values so that they may be able to realize such spiritual values in their daily lives.

Modern Estimates of Religion

The universality of religion is seldom questioned by anyone to-day. Schleiermacher's dictum that "man is incurably religious" is now generally conceded. But what men now sharply ask is whether our religious experiences are really valid for life. Is religion as true in fact as it appears dominant in human consciousness? Is it necessary to man's life? Could civilization move on without priest and prophet, worship and temple?

There are commonly, to-day, three attitudes taken toward the real nature of religion which the teacher of religion must understand in order to deal with men of his time.

Denials of religion.—Many men and women about us with whom we mingle daily have come to look upon all religion of whatever name or form as both false and useless. They declare religion to be a disease of the soul, a perversion of teaching, and a hindrance.

It has come, they hold, as the invention of tricky priests and duped prophets to administer to the ignorant masses in their misery an opiate to assuage their ills by holding out false promises to them of a far-off future of eternal bliss, while their pious masters on this earth rob them of their just material dues and comforts. Thus the fraud of religion, according to this view, supports and sanctions an economic order that protects the exploiter in systematically preying upon the weak and defenseless. Hence, the preachers are their chloroform agents to put to sleep the exploited masses by offering them the drink of spiritual consolation.

[11] *The Evolution of Religion*, volume 1, page 30.

Karl Marx, whose teachings have permeated the philosophy of recent Russia, has been the modern leader of this school of thinking: hence the attempt in Russia to put an end to religion. But the religious spirit of Russia would not have it so. The followers of Karl Marx are found everywhere, more particularly in the ranks of the toilers, who feel most the heavy pressure of capitalistic hands.

This view, of course, is a hopeless denial of religion itself. It is in direct and uncompromising conflict with human nature, which is undeniably and universally religious. Man seems to have been made for the company of the Deity, and his heart is restless until it rests in God.

"Religion is not a failure. It is not outgrown. It is not bankrupt. Without religion the world will never be healed from the woes that affect it."[12] Spiritual uplift and moral stimulus are the compelling message that no other agency can or will give forth. It must come from organized religion or not at all. Hence, religious faith fills the world with songs, prayers, priests, and temples, and will continue to do so while needy man remains an aspiring being.

Tolerance of religion.—There are others to-day, especially among educated classes, who regard religion as useful to man but none the less false. All religions they hold to be equally useful but almost equally false.

People, they say, make good use of religion in a growing society. They need its aid. It affords a temporary stimulus by raising great hopes and holding out fine dreams of impossible things. Religion creates the sacrificial spirit, the patient waiting, an ideal goal, and freshens the human spirit. All this is held to be *useful* but false in reality. Religion, therefore, may be used and tolerated as a temporary aid to man's development. When he reaches his full stature, however, he will see its falsity and discard it as he does an outworn garment.

This position, of course, is seen to be self-destructive. It contradicts itself. That which is broadly useful can hardly be false. One might as well say that water is useful because it slakes thirst but it is false; it has no real

[12] *If Winter Comes*, Hutchinson, note, page 4.

existence, because some day we shall become so perfect physically that we shall not crave water. Then we shall see the falsity thereof. Since the religious impulse is implicit in human nature, some form of religion will continue.

There are others to-day who regard religion as both useful and true. Since religion is proving itself essential to human welfare, that proves it to be true. There is and is needed no other proof. Such beliefs and practices as enrich, help, and deepen human life prove religion to be true. The useful is the true simply because it proves useful.

This position is known as pragmatism. It was made famous by William James, of Harvard. Many of the psychological and social writers of the day seem to share this view. It is attractive to Americans because it originated on American soil and portrays with a fair degree of accuracy a marked tendency of the American spirit. It rests back on a theory of the *nature* of truth which holds that if a thing is true, it will work out favorably in practice; if false, it will fail in practice.

There is much truth in this position. The fallacy lies in supposing that the usefulness of religion constitutes the *only* test of its reality, whereas it is merely *a* test. We could not long reverence a God whose real existence we doubted.

Devotion to religion.—Millions there are who are ardently devoted to religion, to whom faith in the invisible Helper is a genuine reality of their daily lives. Through some mystical experience they find God a working reality. It is more than reason; it is a working faith in things unseen. To them God is unquestionably a living fact, for they experience his caring presence. God is a daily refreshening power that lifts in the hard places of life.

While such a devotion in religion proves useful, they believe that it does so because it is objectively true, true in fact, founded upon the nature of things. Their confidence and devotion rest back immovably upon the belief that there is an abiding spiritual order that man did not make, but to which he must conform—an order grounded deep in the very order of the universe.

There must be, then, a solid factor in religion which transcends our puny experiences of which we become aware. As truly as eyes were made for light, light was provided for eyes. This same mutuality of harmony appears to be true in matters of religion. Hence, if the pure in heart see God, it is because there is a God to see. Thus, truth, we are persuaded, inheres in the universe itself and is a deeper thing than mere utility. Religious experience is the way of making the contact with unseen realities. What is eternally true in religion is that which registers itself beneficially in our experience of it. Prayer, for example, proves subjectively beneficial, reassures, respirits, and makes for peace because there is One who hears and cares and helps in the way of the heart by reheartening the humble petitioner. Faith in such a reality makes for a new kind of religious devotion. Therefore, truth in religion is greater than anyone's or everyone's experience of it. God is bigger than our best experience or fullest attainable knowledge of him. This is in the main the Christian view of religion.

What men, therefore, generally believe and practice in common as true and useful, binding and restraining, ideal and inspiring, may be taken as true in fact. The God who made us with an instinct for religion we may also believe made a spiritual system for us to live in. The soul that calls for God finds the God-Friend who made the soul. Emerson most happily gave expression to this truth of religion in the following lines:

> So nigh is grandeur to our dust,
> So near is God to man,
> When Duty whispers low, Thou must,
> The youth replies, I can![13]

Thought Questions

1. What makes man so deeply concerned with religion?
2. Why is there need for religion?
3. What makes us believe that "another mind" than our own is at work in us and in the world?
4. Where shall we look for the origin of religion?

[13] *Voluntaries*, Emerson.

5. What important stages has the growth of religion passed through?
6. What is the goal of religion?
7. What are the main modern estimates of religion?

Suggested Readings

What Is Religion? Bousset.
The Essence of Religion, Bowne.
The Reconstruction of Religion, Ellwood, Chapters I, II, IV.
A New Mind for the New Age, King, Chapter VI.
The Rise of Modern Religious Ideas, McGiffert, Chapter V.
The History of Religion, Menzies.
The Religious Basis of a Better World Order, Newton, Chapter IV.
Outline of a Philosophy of Religion, Sabatier, Chapter I.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTIAN WAY OF LIFE

Christianity is at once a life, a doctrine, and an institution, and may be studied from each of these angles of approach; but it is chiefly a way of life.

The Present Need for Christianity

There are reasons both from without and from within the church to-day why we need the best religion that there is and the best efforts that the best religion can put forth. "The religion worth having," says Carver, of Harvard, "is the religion which (1) acts most powerfully as a spur to energy and (2) directs that energy most productively."[1]

Stemming the modern drift.—We need to-day, as never before, the steadying hand; we need the governing ideal, the bracing faith, the lifting power, and the mellowing spirit of a religion like Christianity. There is a modern drift in the affairs of men which has a smothering effect upon the soul, and nothing but the finest spiritual force can stop this drift from covering us over. The age is not intentionally unspiritual but in common practice it fails to take account of religion.

The drift of the world has been toward scientific triumphs and material achievements. These have joined their forces to produce the needful goods of life. Science has furnished the technical knowledge about the world of things, and industry has not only capitalized it to supply man with his pressing needs but has also anticipated man's wildest desires and most morbid tastes. Hence, the achievements of modern civilization have turned out both a curse and a blessing. How such an amazing development of civilization shall finally turn out hinges upon human ideals or the essential meanings we give to life. Here lies the crux of the modern issue.

[1] *The Religion Worth Having*, pages 12–13.

Inventions and discoveries may become huge forces of destruction when turned into instruments of war and deadly gases or they may become welcome forces of blessing when turned into instruments of human service. In this regard our modern forces are sadly divided. They short-circuit each other. The reason lies chiefly in the lack of a high, clear, united ideal to govern our age. The larger part of the modern drift is too swift in the direction of self-sufficiency and self-seeking.

The first markedly alarming tendency in the modern drift has therefore been unduly to increase man's self-reliance and self-help. With his increased power over nature he can help himself; he is quite self-sufficient. These gains have caused some to leave religion out of account. If more food is needed, the modern man does not call upon God for rain but dams up the rivers, irrigates the desert places, scientifically improves and treats the soil, and by selective breeding improves both plants and animals. If he needs protection against disease, he turns no longer to God for protection but to a well-ordered health department to stop the ravages of disease. Without knowing it or even wanting it, the man of to-day finds himself inevitably drifting away from the old forms of dependence upon God for help and often fails to connect God at all with the new methods.

We do not desire that man should resort to the older method of appealing for miraculous aid, but that in these modern scientific methods of controlling nature he should continue to recognize the unfailing presence and activity of the Divine. The trained mind and skilled hands of the twentieth-century physician more effectively manifest the power of God than the magical powers of the ancient medicine man.

Life and civilization are more than meat and drink, toil and industry, cables and skyscrapers. Life turns upon the meaning we give to it, the inherent values we find in it. When science has given us all its facts, and industry has turned the material world into foods and fabrics, streets and stores, telephones and radio receivers, do we not still need something that science and commerce cannot give? Trouble, temptation, defeat, and misery are

still here. We need the consolation and ideal and spirit of religion. What can better meet this need than the religion of Jesus?

Giving fuller meaning to life.—Human life turns upon the interpretation that is given to it. To-day there is a tangle of meanings given to life. One meets with those who say that life has no meaning at all; it is a blind shuffle and mad grab for the biggest stake. This view of course cuts the human nerve and sends the race back to the wolf pack again.

There are those—and they are legion—who interpret life in terms of material service: doing what good you can, finding your happiness in being busy at something and helping to increase the physical comforts of your fellow men, seeing to it that they have more light, food, medicine, play, and protection. This is praiseworthy so far as it goes. It is good but it is not good enough to last the whole distance of human needs. Nothing will stay us to the end of the trail but a world view big enough to supply adequate motives to brace us for the service that humanity needs from us. Christianity embodies just such a world view. We might almost say that it is a cheerful naturalism gone humanitarian.

Spiritualizing modern civilization.—It is tritely charged that Christianity has failed, that it is impotent, that it has lost power over the modern world and can no longer control civilization; but this charge can be made with equal force against education, politics, art, and science. All have partially failed but all have also in part succeeded. The expectation, at least on the part of the more serious and thoughtful students of our time, is that unless Christianity succeeds in revitalizing this age, our boasted Christian civilization must fail miserably! Christianity is doing more than any other civilizing force.[2]

We are all aware of the painful fact that we live in a time of frightful unrest. What is the solution? Christianity, we believe, is the solution for the unrest and unreason and the fret and fever of our time at home and

[2] Witness such books as *The Reconstruction of Religion*, Ellwood; *Christianity and Progress*, Fosdick; *A Social Theory of Religious Education*, Coe; *The Religious Basis of a Better World Order*, Newton; *A New Mind for the New Age*, King; *The Outlook for Religion*, Orchard.

across the seas. Wherever and whenever Christianity has been honestly, consistently, sincerely, intelligently, and passionately tried it has always met the situation. Christianity is no longer an experiment but an experience, a life-giving attraction.

The Meaning of Christianity

The pressing, practical needs of human life must be met in each day's adventure. Some kind of religious faith is certain to be called upon to meet them. These needs, however, are not well served unless met in the highest attainable ideal.

Christianity is complex in its meaning. It is at once a way to live, a way to think about life and its problems, and a fellowship of Christ and the Christian brotherhood.

Christ, his spirit and teaching, we hold, can fill the need that men have to-day, but perhaps not in precisely the same way as of old. But the Christian faith for men of to-day must speak in the language of to-day, must dress in the clothes of to-day, must think in the ideas of to-day, must seek to meet squarely the changing conditions of to-day. What, then, does it mean to be a Christian?

A new way to live.—Out of the heart and life of Jesus there issued a new ideal of life. In him was the life abundant. He said, "I came that they may have life, and may have *it* abundantly" (John 10. 10). "God gave unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son" (1 John 5. 11). "He that hath the Son hath the life" (1 John 5. 12). The pulsing life of Jesus, an actual historic Person, has stimulated a new way of living. He is the first and best Christian. His spirit is also the living power in each Christian experience.

The life of the Christian must show, above everything else, Christlikeness. It is a kind of conduct like that which was manifested in Jesus. The essence of Jesus' life was an expression of obedience to God's will, a feeling of good will to man, and the fruit of sacrificial service in building a kingdom of good relations.

Christianity as it sprang from Jesus is, then, above all else, the kind of life to live. "It is a life as good as life can be made," as Clarke so aptly puts it, "in all the three

great relations—namely, toward God, in oneself, and toward other men."[3] In fact, all real religion begins as a living experience and continues as a way of living in real human relations. Christianity is unique in that it aims to make good men. When the Christlike spirit manifests itself in our acts, we are Christian in conduct. When we insist that Christianity is this kind of life we believe in the goodness of personality.

A new way to think.—If we follow the ideal of Jesus, it is apparent that he has compelled a way of thinking about life and its practical problems. The Christian life has to do chiefly with motives and conduct but it also has to do with the kind of ideal that is fittest to govern conduct. How we shall think about our human problems and how we shall interpret the meanings of life are essential matters if the best life is to be had. Good intentions must be hitched to the worthiest standard of life. Christian ideals, then, are most important as the guide of Christian living. The ideas of the Christian must square with the mind of Christ. The thinking of the church must seek to be clear-sighted.

The church indeed seeks to interpret the ideal of Jesus in terms of the best life that it is possible to have. This attempt has not always nor in all particulars been adequate; but in the main the church has faithfully reflected the mind and zealously spread the spirit of Jesus Christ. It has sometimes been all too eager to speculate upon the Christian facts and to compel the acceptance of theories *about* the Christ ideal as necessary to salvation, so that creed has been valued above deed.

Each generation of Christians has need to reinterpret its faith and to restate its creed in terms that fit growing needs of changing life. Christianity is charged with living spiritual power, but that power is best released and spread, in our day, through current forms of expression. The church's creed should remain no more fixed than the architecture of its buildings. Many and constant have been the changes in church architecture. Many to-day keenly feel the need of creedal restatement. The tallow dip has been exchanged for the electric globe. The new mode

[3] *The Ideal of Jesus*, page 263.

of lighting functions better than the old. So may new explanations of the Light of the World convey better to modern man the luminary of the soul.

A new way to fellowship.—Christianity is more than a living and thinking: it is also a way of fellowship. Jesus, the founder of Christianity, most often said "Follow me" (Matt. 16. 24). "*Then* are ye truly my disciples [learners]" (John 8. 31); "Ye are brethren" (Matt. 23. 8). This natural, simple association together of those who followed Christ was the early nucleus of the Christian Church. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11. 26).

Paul, the first and foremost interpreter of Christ, insisted that "Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself up for it, . . . that he might present the church to himself a glorious *church,* not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5. 25, 27). Essentially the church is neither a building nor a congregation; it is a fellowship of believers united by the Christ spirit and ideal of life. This spiritual fellowship is one of the distinctive marks of the Christian faith.

The Progress of Christianity

The best sign of life is growth. No religion has shown its vigor more than Christianity in the ability to adapt itself to changing conditions of a developing civilization. It has passed through a half dozen stages in its history from the first to the twentieth century. We now briefly trace that progress in order to understand better the religion we have inherited from the past.

The religion of Jesus.—Jesus came, lived a simple, useful life, and gave an oral gospel, spoken into the ears of hungry, humble folk who heard him gladly. The substance of his message of good news consisted (1) in what he was, (2) in what he said, (3) in what appear to have been the principles of his life as evidenced in his deeds and sayings. These principles were the earnest expression of his very heart and life.

Jesus, first of all, laid deep and repeated stress on *fellowship* with the invisible world. He taught men

always to think of Father when they thought of God and to achieve spiritual sonship with him in perfect love and true obedience.

In the next place, Jesus demanded *reality* in religious life and condemned unsparingly pretense and hypocrisy in religion. Fast and give and pray to be seen of God, not of men.

Again, Jesus regarded the heart as the source of life and stressed the importance of *motive,* because motive runs back to character, and character expresses itself in appropriate deeds as its natural fruit.

Once more, Jesus placed supreme value upon *human life.* Although men are lost, like stray sheep, they are children of the good Father, who yearns for them to come home (Luke 15. 4-7). They are worth saving, and whatever therefore ministers to the highest welfare of men he approved (Luke 15. 7). Man is the greatest object of divine care and loving concern. Thus, Jesus gave to religion a delightful simplicity, a renewed vitality, and a note of joy and fullness. All that claims to be Christian must in the end come to him to be tested.

Apostolic Christianity.—When we pass from the simple message of Jesus to that of the apostles, half a century after his death, especially as set forth by Paul, the dominant mind in the New Testament, we come upon an elaborate system centering about a scheme of redemption from sin, the person of Christ, crucifixion, the resurrection, and the gift of the Spirit. This system is offered as the gospel of salvation.

1. Jesus, the Messiah, the preexistent Lord from heaven, at the call and plan of God became the Saviour of sinful men (2 Cor. 5. 19; Eph. 3. 19; 4. 13).

2. Sin, which Jesus treated as wrong choice (Luke 15. 11-32), Paul treats as an evil Power that dwells in the flesh (Rom. 7. 18-20) and as a universal disease (Rom. 3. 23), the fruit of which is death (Rom. 6. 23).

3. Deliverance from the power of sin is possible by faith in the crucified and risen Lord (Gal. 6. 14).

4. Man's sin has estranged him from God, and he must be reconciled to God. This, Paul holds, is accomplished by the loving act of God in Christ's cross when acted upon

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by faith; that is, man's belief in and reliance upon this divine act of sacrificial love saves (Rom. 5. 10).

5. This act of faith justifies the sinner before God, frees him from this guilt, and puts him in favor with God again (Rom. 5. 1).

6. The pardoned sinner now enters the new life of the Spirit (Rom. 8. 1-2), which is the indwelling Christ (Gal. 2. 20) and which insures victory over the sinful man of the flesh (Rom. 6. 22).

7. There is a sanctifying process in the growing life of the Spirit, which means further struggle because of the evil world in which man still must live and the sinful flesh in which his spirit still dwells (Rom. 8. 6-9). This is the victory of the spirit over the flesh (Rom. 8. 1-2). Thus, to possess the spirit of Christ is to have salvation (Rom. 5. 18-19).

This, in brief, sets forth the more important convictions of the apostolic church. The simple, living message of Jesus has incorporated itself in a theology.

Catholic Christianity.—From the second century to the sixteenth, from the early church Fathers to the reformers, the Christian religion, for our purpose, might be called catholic Christianity. While there are notable modifications made in doctrines from the position of the "Ancient Catholic" and the later Roman Catholic Christianity, the fundamental positions are very similar.

Both the ancient and the modern Catholic church agreed with the apostolic slogan that "Christ died for our sins" according to the plan of God and was "raised from the dead" to be our Saviour. But Catholic Christianity modified radically the method of offering salvation. Instead of the early followers' glow of the Christ spirit there came the religion of authority; instead of the simple brotherhood of believers came a church of law, doctrines, and sacraments; instead of the simple gospel of Jesus came dogma; in the place of the saving Christ of Paul came definitions about Christ's person; instead of salvation by faith in Christ came salvation by the medium of authorized priests of a divinely sanctioned institution—the church; instead of faith as active trust came faith as mere intellectual belief in theories about God, Christ, salvation,

and human nature. This took Christianity a long way from the heart of Paul's redemptive gospel of free grace in Christ.

In the later Roman Christianity these differences were intensified. The church became *the* institution of salvation. Its decrees were final, binding, divine, and infallible. Divine grace was dispensed through the sacraments of the church only. The faithful observance of prescribed feasts, fasts, prayers, and penances, having little or no foundation in the religion of Jesus, constituted, in main, the Christian life.

Protestant Christianity.—The evangelical Christianity that started with the Reformation under Luther in the sixteenth century shattered this Roman, water-tight system of Christian thought and administration.

Luther and his followers went back to Paul's free grace and salvation by faith in Christ. Instead of mediating priests came back again justification by grace; instead of works of penance came repentance of sin; in place of meritorious works came the free gift of God; in place of infusion of sacraments came the sacredness of transformed life; instead of infallible dogma came the infallible Bible; instead of the authority of the church came the authority of Christ and conscience. Protestantism was the new movement in quest of the gospel way of salvation, but in that quest was found a new theology.

Protestantism in its history of four hundred years has split into many branches, each holding, in part, distinctive views with marked modifications of Luther's Reformation teachings; but, in the main, all the sectarian children have retained certain family traits.

God's grace alone is trusted for salvation. The Christ-likeness of God as seen in Jesus, the importance of the crucifixion and resurrection as God's plan of redemption, faith as the instrument by which we lay hold of the living Christ, justification as the saving act, sanctification as the saving process, good character as a necessary outcome of salvation, and the Bible and conscience as authority are matters that Protestantism has never lost sight of during centuries of development.

Reconstructing Christianity.—Christianity is face to

face with the problem of a fresh reconstruction of its beliefs, for men of to-day clamor for a simpler statement of their Christian faith that shall make friends with our age, the age of science, industry, and democracy. Can an ancient ideal function in a modern world? The modern man cannot live in a form of civilization that is gone. Even an ugly present will not be given up for a charming past unless the best of that past is made consistent with modern ways and intellectual habits. By those loyal to Christianity the search is not for a new way of salvation, not for a substitute for Christ, not for a method of getting rid of the Bible, nor for a means of doing away with God; but for a better and clearer understanding of the way to individual and social recovery and a fearless and positive application of matters of vital concern to present conditions of life.

Modern thinkers desire not to offer a substitute for Christ but, rather, to rediscover the Jesus of the Gospels. There is no effort to get rid of the Bible but, rather, to find the essential message that it can give to men of this age in helping them to solve the delicate problems confronting them to-day. The intention is not to neglect the cross but to find its true meaning of sacrificial love. There is no desire to overlook sin and flaunt repentance; but there is an effort to stress sin as much in its social bearing as in its individual setting and to find repentance in positive changes of living together. Here, then, are the lines along which reconstruction is taking place, and they seem all for the good of Christianity.

Thought Questions

1. In what way is Christianity unique among the religions of mankind?
2. What do we look for in Christians as their distinctive marks?
3. How are Christians different from non-Christians?
4. Is the teaching of Jesus and of your church the same?
5. Through what marked stages of development has Christianity passed?

6. Do we need a reinterpretation of Christianity today? Why?

Suggested Readings

Christianity and Progress, Fosdick, Lecture IV.
Jesus in the Experience of Men, Glover, Chapter XIV.
What Did Jesus Teach? Graves, Chapter IX.
Jesus Christ and the Christian Character, Peabody, Chapters I and III.
Christian Ways of Salvation, Richards, Chapters IV, V, VII.

CHAPTER III

THE WORLD WE EXPERIENCE

MAN'S earthly life is cradled in a vast world of reality which touches his little life round about, beneath, and above. Men are utterly dependent for the continuance of life momentarily on the air they breathe, the sun that warms, the soil that feeds, the friends that companion them. Thus, man and his world are inseparable.

THE MAKING OF THE WORLD

We are lured beyond our material limits, where the borderland of the invisible begins, while we yet run on feet of flesh upon the solid earth. The unrelenting pressure of human needs which digs into the deeps of universal reality arouses the spirit to solve the meanings of the world to the uttermost bound. Therefore, all reality must find place in our world of thought.

How was the world made?—About us lies a world of things. Experience assures us of that. Stones and sticks and stars and creeping things are facts of common experience. How did these things come to be? Modern science makes it clear that there is only one way of finding out what we desire to know, and that is by a close study of the facts of the world. Science has made that study and brings back the answer from the fossil rocks of the past and from the biological facts of living organisms that the making of the world has been a long, long process; but science itself, as such, is indifferent as to the nature of the Power that created the world.

There are personal and impersonal views of the world. These differ radically from each other. There are those who think that modern science has read God out of the creative process. They hold that the world is a vast mechanism, bound together by necessary manipulation of blind forces that work together without a purpose; that

certain elements, forces, and laws have always existed; and that these are self-sufficient to account for all that happens.

There are others who hold that some supreme force or power permeates all, works in and through all as "vital impulse," or "cosmic will," or "mind essence," or "universal consciousness," but quite impersonal in character and, therefore, falling short of the Christian God. These impersonal views of the world we commonly label "atheism," "agnosticism," and "pantheism." The first says that God is not; the second, that God, if at all, is unknowable; and the third, that God is identical with the world.

Christian faith declares that God is the personal power who made the world and has everything to do with it. As Creator of the world God did not complete it in a single week. Creation is still going on before our very eyes.

Christians commonly picture the method of world making in one of two ways: (1) there is the theory that represents God making his world as a watchmaker puts together the pieces of a watch by working from without upon its elements; (2) there is also the theory that represents God at work from within, in the making of the world, by means of indwelling forces that express his life and mind, as we may produce a world of thought and put it into speech—words, sentences, paragraphs—from the living energy of our minds. Thus, God is believed to have produced his great world according to a purpose slowly developed through the ages. The stages of that development science describes and names in geological terms.

When was the world made?—Young minds and literal minds are eager to fix a definite date when the world began. The Bible shows wisdom in declaring, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1. 1). When that "beginning" was we do not know. Once it was set at four thousand years before Christ.

With the light of modern science we know that man himself has lived on this earth not less than twenty-five thousand years and possibly several hundred thousand years, and that the earth was millions of years old when man appeared. Geology finds in the rocks fossils which

point back to untold ages in the past. Christian faith can accept any date, however remote, without inner contradiction of itself.

Who or what made the world?—If the modern man is to think his way up to a personal God at all, it must be by way of present scientific knowledge. Hence, for the modern man God must be presented as living energy *in* things rather than as a statuelike God outside of the world; as the ever-present, indwelling purpose in the changing, growing nature of all substance and life rather than as a remote cause that started things going and then retired.

To-day, then, the Christian's God must appear as the vital, purposing, law-abiding power at work in nature, in the progress of history, and in the growing, improving social consciousness of the race. And the Christian firmly believes that this indwelling, working Power in nature is the personal God and Father revealed in and by Jesus.

The Keeping of the World

It is not enough to have a world Maker: there must also be a world Keeper. The same Power that pushed the world off into time and floated it in space must also be able to keep it moving and afloat. Behind the material fragments and within the living essence we believe that there are pulse beats of a divine Being who manifests himself in a material as well as in a spiritual world. Thus, cohesion, gravitation, and chemical action, as well as spiritual forces, express the divine energy in the world in which we live.

The world as divine process.—The world is not a finished product; it is, rather, a thing in the making. All phases of existence and life show signs of growth, evidences of struggle, movements toward a completion, and unceasing activity. This is not a static world. It is not yet finished. Through the mineral, vegetable, animal, and human orders progress is being made through endless conflicts. Jesus pictured God as the ceaseless Worker, fashioning a world as yet incomplete (John 5. 17).

On the other hand, Christian faith never forgets that the world we experience has a real existence. Neither has

it a fictitious appearance, nor is it a part of God, nor yet a mechanical, self-sufficient system. The world's reality is a dependent reality. Matter is never just mere matter by itself; it consists of centers of tension where God is present everywhere in all its many parts, not as a seed is present in the apple, but as a Person is present in his body. In the tiniest atom or the remotest planet, in the simplest insect and in the noblest person, the God of active progress and creative purpose and loving deeds is present.

For the Christian, then, nature is a real instrument fitted to serve the divine purpose, and through its use man may realize the Christian end, the kingdom of God, by learning its lessons of obedience to law, respect for order, confidence in its regularity, and reverence for its power. Thus, the world serves a spiritual end.

The world as divine providence.—It is easier to-day to picture the living God as a helping Providence in our lives than as a manlike Person near at hand. Speaking of a certain modern vein of skepticism, E. A. Burroughs declares that "we do not deny the existence of God but practically leave him out of our present scheme of existence or give him a modest phrase with a shadowy meaning."[1]

Yet the mass of humble believers live in practical certainty that there is a great Friend who knows about them, who watches over them, and who does for them what they cannot do for themselves. This mystic confidence in the great Heart of the world rests in the doctrine of divine Providence.

What, then, do we mean by the providence of God? We mean to express by it the present relation of God to the world which he has made. Providence works by law, and not by caprice or special isolated acts. God, therefore, in his all-wise providence sustains all living creatures in existence. Man, being most like God, must be his highest object of concern. Christian faith holds that God surrounds us with his providence like an atmosphere in which we live, move, and have our being (Acts 17. 28). Tennyson, in his beautiful lines, has expressed it thus:

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[1] *Biblical World*, August, 1915, page 116.

Speak to Him, thou, for he hears, and spirit with spirit can meet;
Closer is he than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet.[2]

The world as divine purpose.—While science points to progress, though sometimes uneven, religion points to purpose, though often obscure; but both look toward a goal unreached. Everywhere there are signs of something better that is coming. A better physical, social, and spiritual world is in the making. Consequently, the Christian can fall back upon the assurance that the universe is bearing him onward and upward toward some ultimate achievement of human perfection which is in the plan of God. The venture of faith, therefore, consists in subordinating our wills to his and of working with God for the achievement of his kingdom.

Modern Perplexities About the World

How indifferent Nature appears to be to the sting of the wasp, the fang of the serpent, and the flash of the lightning! Does Nature hold no pity in her heart? Yet James Whitcomb Riley could sing:

One only knows our needs and he
Does all the distributing:
I quarrel not with Destiny;
The best is good enough for me.[3]

God and cruelties in nature.—Bitter cold, scorching heat, withering drought, gaunt famine, deadly disease, ruinous earthquakes, devastate the earth with terrifying severity with repeated frequency and to enormous extent. Can the cruelties of Nature be harmonized with the Christian belief in a befriending providence of a good God over all and in all?

First, it may be pointed out that the cruelties of Nature are greatly overestimated. To judge by her works, Nature is not indifferent to beauty, goodness, truth, and sacrifice. She toils faithfully in a million ways to make things better; she patiently plans through the silent centuries to fertilize the barren soil for the coming harvests. How

[2] *The Higher Pantheism.*
[3] *Complete Works*, Biographical Edition, permission The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Volume 3, page 101.

endlessly the birds toil to feed their fledglings, the bees to store honey for their hives, the mother beasts to feed and defend their young!

The inhumanity of man to man has been the bleeding, crushing fact of countless ages; nevertheless, man's struggle to civilize, humanize, and improve has been no less pronounced.

Secondly, it is a happy fact that as man has grown more humane, Nature's cruelties have disturbed him the more. It is an evidence that man has been improving. Thus, in human society cruelty is diminishing in proportion to the practice of Christian ethics.

Thirdly, it may be noted further that willful violation of natural law is certain to turn Nature against man to his hurt. Suffering from transgression of the law is one of the prices we pay for human freedom, yet we would sooner have the freedom than escape the consequences. But when man is obedient to law, Nature is kind to him. The same fire may burn or bless; the same water may quench thirst or drown the careless. Ours is to trust and obey Nature's demands.

Huxley, the great scientist, once wrote, "The ledgers of the Almighty are strictly kept, and every one of us has the balance of his operations paid over to him at the end of every minute of existence."[4] This is the priceless lesson that science has been trying to teach us for a generation.

The God of faith and the fact of evolution.—What is evolution? It is the common scientific belief that the universe we know has been evolved either gradually or by occasional "rapid jumps" through a long process from the simplest inorganic life to the highest animal and human life about us. Thus, all organisms, it is held, have been subject to the same general laws of development from the lowest to the highest. Many earnest Christians to-day are much disturbed about evolution, lest believing it should destroy faith in God and Christ. Some earnest churchmen have even assured the Christian public at large that "evolution has collapsed." If that were so, modern scientists should be the first to know.

[4] *Religious Foundations*, by R. M. Jones, page 51.

Let outstanding scientific scholars speak for themselves. Professor Davenport writes, "I do not know a modern scientific man who does not believe in evolution."[5] "The fact of organic evolution is no longer debated by biologists. It cannot be anti-Christian," writes Professor Coulter.[6] "Does modern science still believe in evolution?" asks Professor Child, and answers, "I would say most emphatically, yes."[7]

Evolution, or some theory of evolution, then, has gained very general acceptance by the modern mind. "Modern science," says Doctor Loeb, "believes more firmly than ever in evolution."[8] "As far as I am aware, scientists accept fully the theory of evolution. Really it is not questioned."[9] It is clear that Christians of to-day can neither deny nor ignore the firm place that belief in evolution holds in the modern world.

The result is that practically all of our thinking in every field of scholarship to-day proceeds along evolutionary lines. Scholars now trace the development of language, society, arts, morality, and religion from their origin to their present state by the evolutionary method. The growing tree, the wriggling worm, the struggling ape, all appear to have passed through various stages on their upward way.

Can one be a Christian and accept evolution? The fact is that millions hold both as true and find no difficulty in so doing. Yet other millions still find it difficult and even impossible to accept the fact of evolution as consistent with the Christian faith. What lies at the bottom of this difference among Christians?

It comes about because different persons will attribute different conclusions to one and the same set of facts. Evolution as an explanation of the growth and development of the entire universe of which we are a part, as we have previously observed, may now safely be said to be an

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[5] Davenport, Charles B., Department of Experimental Evolution, Carnegie Institute of Washington.
[6] Coulter, John M., Professor of Botany, University of Chicago.
[7] Child, C. M., Associate Professor of Zoology, University of Chicago.
[8] Loeb, Jacques, Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, New York City.
[9] Mall, T. P., Professor of Anatomy, Johns Hopkins Medical School. Note: For the foregoing references see the *Biblical World* for February, 1915, page 75f.

undeniable fact. But this does not hinder men from arriving at different speculations when science, as such, has reached the end of its trail. The true scientist himself will be the first to acknowledge that ultimate problems are outside of his realm. As a man he may attribute the whole process of evolution either to a personal God or a blind force; as a scientist he can do neither. It is at this point that the differences that are vital to religion, and especially so to the Christian religion, appear.

There is nothing in the fact of evolution, as such, which rules God out either as the Creator or as the Keeper and Director of his universe any more than God is ruled out of the process of physical, mental, and spiritual growth as daily witnessed in the development of the individual from the single cell to the child and from the child to the grown man. To suppose, then, that God created the original germs from which all existing forms of life have sprung by the slow method of evolution, as God's chosen plan, in no way detracts from God's creative power or controlling grasp of the world. If evolution is the way it is simply his way of growing a universe. In this way we can think of God as immediately and creatively present in each and every form that appears in the process of unfolding the world.

The God of the Christian faith is big enough to be the personal Power that creates by the vast process of evolution.

Perhaps it should be said here that such a harmonizing of the fact of evolution with the fact of a personal and Christian God is not a futile and stretched attempt to bring together what have often been considered as antagonistic fields of human endeavor—that is, science and religion. It seems to the author that the truth of God can be but *one*. There cannot be any essential conflict of truths in different realms, especially since all realms are the realm of God. The same God must be operative in largely the same way in all of them; certainly he cannot contradict himself and still be orderly and understandable. Evolution, then, is only the orderly fashion in which an orderly God is growing an orderly world. The laws we have called "natural" on this basis are only the laws of

God. A progressive Christianity thus makes room for science.

Natural law and the invasion of miracles.—Apparently the more the modern man knows of science, the less he is concerned with miracles. He depends more and more on the world in its solid, silent ongoing as the confident findings of science report it. The world under control of natural law has become a habit of mind to-day. Science has cut down the measure of mystery.

On the other hand, there are millions of Christians who would say with Bishop Quayle, "Never for a minute since first I guessed in earnest that this world was God's have I been other than knowing that if things belonged to God, no moment could be free from the invasion of wonder."[10]

Here appear to be two different voices speaking: the voice of science saying, "All is order; nothing can fall outside of law," and voices of religion, which seem to say, "There is still the invasion of wonder; things happen every day which are miraculous, which no science can fully explain." Can the scientific respect for natural law as ruling the world be harmonized with the religious conviction that God is free and unhampered in his movements about the world?

In answer to this fundamental question it should be said that it depends on our definition both of "natural law" and of "miracle." If by a natural law is meant a closed system of mechanical forces, and if by miracle are meant arbitrary divine intrusions, acts in violation of natural law, then there is no reconciliation of the two factors.

But if, on the other hand, by natural law is meant that the personal God of the universe sustains and orders all things according to law and not caprice; and if by miracle is meant that unusual events may take place, not explained by the now known processes of nature but by the operation of some higher law of personality within the physical order for some special purpose pleasing to the God of all law, love, and wisdom, then the two factors are harmonized, since the same personal God is the author of both law and such miracle. Therefore, the modern man

[10] *With Earth and Sky*, page 46.

looks for evidences of God's power and presence, most of all, in the regular order of things, while men formerly looked for God chiefly in occasional miraculous events.

This discovery that the realm of law is wider than the physical order, that there is also a realm of spiritual law —one the law of things, the other the law of persons—has a tendency to modify our thinking about miracles. We now see them as a higher law of the personal at work within the physical order. Laws of personality, of course, are not to be taken as outside the realm of nature; they are as natural and as fixed as are physical and mechanical laws.

I can thrust out my hand and stop a falling ball and thus, to some extent, control the natural results of gravitation by personal will. Thus, a higher law of personality produces new effects in the realm of physical law. It is reasonable to believe that the infinite God can do as much and more. That opens the way for the invasion of wonders. Hence, Doctor Brown can well say, "Science recognizes no single miracle, because all the world has become miraculous."[11]

Obviously, then, for us to-day the miraculous must mean the sympathetic workings of God's activity in producing a Christlike order of things, according to the universe.

Thought Questions

1. What do we mean by the term "the world"?
2. According to science how was the world made?
3. Wherein do personal and impersonal views of world making differ from each other?
4. Why is it better to believe in the Christian God as the Maker of the world than in a blind force?
5. How long does science hold that the world has existed?
6. Why does Christian faith to-day find it easier to believe that God works within the world rather than upon it from without?
7. What is the nature of the divine process?
8. What is meant by divine Providence?

[11] *Christian Theology in Outline*, by W. A. Brown, page 228.

9. What are the leading perplexities that the modern man finds in thinking about the world?

Suggested Readings

The New World, Black, Chapters I, II, IV.
Apologetics, Bruce, Chapter II.
Christian Theology in Outline, Brown, Part III.
The Essentials of Christianity, Sheldon, Chapter IV.

CHAPTER IV

THE GOD OF OUR TRUST

"TRUE religion is betting one's life that there is a God."[1] What men think of God sets the pace for their moral and spiritual struggle. The measure of a man's religion is found in his thought of God. A vest-pocket edition of Deity has its outcome in clay idols, petty prayers, trifling altar gifts, and a thin morality. Worshipers may be meaner than their concept of God but never better. Consequently, much in religion depends on the kind of God men are "betting that there is."

WHY MEN BELIEVE IN GOD

Men do believe in a God or in a something that answers the felt need for a supreme Power. Whether men believe in a desireless Buddha, a sleeping Brahma, a despotic Allah, a kingly Jehovah, or a Christlike Father, God comes to full light in the type of civilization that each variety produces.

Reason demands God.—Imbedded in man's reason is a logical urge to find something final, something all-inclusive, something that will explain all that appears in the many and differing elements of human experience.

Man finds himself in a world he did not make and cannot greatly change; a world full of strange forces, myriad objects, vast movements, all of which call for explanations that will prove satisfactory to human reason. But the *kind* of God man finds depends in no small measure on the development of his moral consciousness.

Man's thinking seeks for *unity* among the numberless elements of the universe. In the idea of God he finds that unity, either in the form of abstract—if not impersonal—unity, as in pantheism,[2] or in personal unity, as

[1] *A Student in Arms*, Hankey, page 190.

[2] Pantheism may be defined as the doctrine that the universe, taken or conceived as a whole, is God.

in theism.[3] Christianity is based upon a theistic interpretation of the universe.

Furthermore, the mind craves a final *cause* as the starting point for all things, and looks for it in some final Power that satisfactorily explains the long chain of separate effects that man beholds in nature. His mind cannot rest in an endless chain of secondary causes. Here again a Supreme Creator most nearly explains all the facts of the universe.

Reason also demands that God shall be interpreted in terms of *perfection* of not the lowest but the highest forms of existing life, such as is found in man himself. Man is a person; hence, God may be a Person. This thought is not to be confused with a purely materialistic identification of man with his body; when we speak of man as a person we think precisely of that in him which is least material and most spiritual, so that in ascribing personality to God we are in no sense putting upon him the limitation of a material body; we are, rather, affirming that however much more he may be he cannot be less in his essential nature than the highest known creature—man himself. Thus, God is best thought of as a Person, and not as identical with either force, matter, or law.

Experience craves God.—Not all of God is demonstrated by reason. The best of God is found in a life of direct experience. We live our way into existence before we think our way out into the clear. There is only one sure road to God, and that is to "feel after him and find him" (Acts 17. 27). Man will have a God because he craves one and cannot escape feeling the need for more than merely human help.

We begin our search for God, therefore, by accepting as real what our best impulses find most helpful to life. We discover God as we discover our own friends—by seeking him, by believing in him, and by using him.

Consequently, experience is the surest way to the heart of God. To be understood, religion must be felt. The

[3] "Theism" is a word employed to indicate a type of belief in one God, which affirms the existence of this God as a personal Being who is Creator of the world and the indwelling Power controlling nature.

divine Presence must be grounded in an immediate experience of the soul. But unless such direct sense of the divine Presence is controlled by an object within the realm of human experience which faithfully reflects God, the experience may end in mere unintelligent, ecstatic emotion. In the Christian faith such mystical feeling is controlled by the likeness of God discovered by Jesus. Thus, the historic person of Jesus, whom Christians believe to have been like God, shapes for them the moral and spiritual character of God. The kind of God that Jesus experienced and reflected, our own best experience craves and approves.

Revelation discloses God.—One of the most fruitful ways of learning about God has been found in turning to records of revelation, for revelation is a kind of exalted experience. Religion in its most direct and deepest approach to God is through mystical forms of experience—experiences in which the solid conviction holds that God reveals himself in a vital, personal way to make important moral and spiritual truths known. The records of such revelations are treated as sacred.

Christians, for the most part, have turned for light about God to their sacred records—the Bible. The highest biblical revelation of God is that of a personal, moral, and spiritual character that manifests the three supreme qualities of perfect wisdom, perfect love, and perfect holiness.

The God of the Christian revelation, therefore, is a supreme moral Being who is capable of sharing our varied experiences, that he may help us in our temptations, struggles, and sufferings. This friendly, caring God is made known to us most clearly in the life and character of Jesus Christ, who expresses in human form the high qualities of wisdom, love, and righteousness which we believe to exist supremely in God.

As Christians, therefore, we believe stoutly in the personal, living, loving God of Jesus, because to have seen Jesus is to have seen God; for the God-experience of Jesus is the highest revelation of the character of God ever disclosed to man. "In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2. 9).

What Is the Christian Idea of God?

The common Christian confession of God, made by millions every Sunday in the recital of the Apostles' Creed, runs thus: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

We are in some danger in the use of such a formula of expressing in cold and formal words the idea of the living, loving God of Jesus, who was to him a daily freshening reality by which he lived. To get at the heart of this concept of God as held and declared by Jesus is the aim of the present discussion.

We must try to find the source, set forth the contents, and estimate the worth of the Christian idea of God.

Whence the Christian idea of God?—The idea—any idea—of God appears to have sprung from three sources: (1) the instinctive quest for ultimate explanations, (2) the instinctive feeling of dependence upon a something not ourselves, and (3) the universal belief that the Supreme Power reveals itself in nature and in human experience.

In the Christian idea of God three constant elements appear: (1) an all-loving, all-righteous, all-holy personality; (2) a Being of adequate power, of perfect wisdom, of unchanging purpose, and of universal presence; and (3) a Christlike God of fatherly goodness.

Whence come these abiding elements in the Christian idea of God? They are traceable to three distinct sources —Hebrew, Greek, and Christian.

Jesus and his first followers were Jews. They held the Old Testament idea of God and brought it over into the new faith with them. The existence and the personality of God are taken for granted throughout the Old Testament. The supremacy and ethical excellence of God are themes of frequent and enlarging reiteration. "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (Psa. 14. 1). This supreme and ethical God of the Old Testament, the God of the whole earth, was Israel's noble gift to Christianity.

In the early centuries of Christianity the new faith took deep root in the Greco-Roman soil, where Greek

speculation had already become the habit of mind. When these pagans became Christians, the idea of Plato's abstract reason was imported into Christian thought, and the near and friendly Father-God of Jesus was largely supplanted by the cold, colorless, changeless, and distant God of the speculative efforts of the early church Fathers, who were trained in Greek speculative thought.

The uniquely Christian element in the idea of God, however, Jesus disclosed to his disciples in his own godlike life. The godlike character of Jesus revealed the Christlike character of God. To a closer consideration of this we now turn.

What is unique in the Christian idea of God?—The one absolutely distinct element in the Christian idea of God which is met nowhere else in the world is the Christlikeness of God contributed by Jesus. God was revealed in Christ in a higher and fuller sense than was given in the Old Testament. Jesus transformed and enriched and enlarged the idea of the personality of God.

The distant God he brought near into the very hearts of men; the supreme God in heaven became the companionable Friend of men; the stern, lawmaking God of Israel was transformed into the loving, fatherly God of each individual man; the cold God of Greek abstraction was displaced by a personal Being of sacrificial spirit.

Thus, Jesus did not bring a startlingly new idea of God, but in his own snow-white character and clear insight he gave a visible picture of God as the Lord of the universe, invested with unfailing good will, with unchanging purpose to work for beneficent ends, and with self-giving spirit ready to sacrifice and suffer for the good of others. It was Jesus who taught men to call the eternal God "our Father." But even more than in his teaching it is in the loving life and self-sacrificing death of Jesus that the amazing wonder of the character of the eternal God becomes evident.

The worth of the Christian idea of God.—Nothing finer, nothing better, nothing nobler than the God that men see revealed in and by Jesus could be desired. Paul has well said that "in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2. 9). The God of Jesus is

the boundless, beneficent Person, perfect in character, near at hand, the Power that keeps us, the Love that transforms us, and the higher Righteousness that saves us.

With such a loving Father at work in this universe we can live in courage, confident that in cooperation with him goodness, righteousness, and love will win in the end, for these are at the center of existence. They are the supreme and eternal values in the beating heart of the Christian God. He is the never-resting Creator and Keeper of all existence. Such a view of God invites the most intimate fellowship and ardent communion because it shows God as not only understanding but actually sharing our very life and experience. It is easy to pray to such a God. Moreover, under the lead of such a God it is possible to work for progress and to believe in victory even in the face of the most staggering evil.

Difficulties in the Christian Idea of God

The eternal God is vastly more than any idea that men can form about him; consequently, the best that men can think about God presents many difficulties. It must be something like this that George C. Stewart has in mind when he urges that the "supreme aim is to call God in from the frontiers and to make him real, neighborly, available, usable, indispensable, . . . a living Presence and Power, not a dead, impassive name."[4]

The whereabouts of God.—Young people often ask: "How can God be everywhere at once? Only forces like electrical energy can fill all things at once. Persons can be in only one place at a time. How, then, can a personal God be everywhere at once?"

This difficulty appears to younger minds as profound. My answer is usually an illustration of stretching out both arms and moving my fingers and remarking that if I, a person, can affect myself in different parts of my body at once and at will, were my body composed of the whole earth, I could as easily be present in Los Angeles and New York City at the same moment as now at two points six feet apart in my own body.

[4] *Religious Education*, June, 1922, page 201.

In some such sense the great God may be immediately present in all parts of his universe. The whereabouts of God have always presented difficulty, because two factors have to be reconciled—the belief that the whole universe is the work of a single, controlling, orderly mind; and, on the other hand, that every tiny detail of its many parts momentarily depends on a constant and immediate divine presence in them. The teaching that God is both above the world and within the world, afar off and very nigh, has Christian sanction.

The two ideas are reconciled only when it is kept in mind that the great God manifests himself in things that are, but that not all of God shines through the visible world or even the known universe. He is still something other and more in himself than the universe he has created and upholds. In that sense God is transcendent, above and beyond the world. But, on the other hand, he is the unfailing energy that makes for things as they are. His life energy maintains them at every moment and at every point. In this sense he is immanent, present in things. When we grasp both sides of this apparent contradiction we find the same harmony that exists between the musician and the tune he plays: he is at once both *in* the music and *beyond* it, immanent and transcendent.

Thus, the two ideas that God is over all, the Maker and Keeper of the world, and that God is the fatherly Friend of sinful, needy men, ever present in the world, have joined in our faith to express that God is both the energy and life expressed *in* things and at the same time is the producing Power behind and above things.

How reconcile God and evil?—Often where the personality and loving character of God are nominally accepted, there is difficulty in relating him to the vast problem of evil. Seeing that there are present in the world evil, sorrow, pain, sin, and death, how can these dread misfortunes of life be reconciled with a God who is good? Obviously the nobler the idea of God, the more troublesome becomes the problem.

First, it will not help us in the face of such stubborn and unfriendly facts as evil presents to relieve God of personal responsibility for the results produced by his

agents—the laws and forces at work in the field. Nor, again, do we get much relief in trying to fool ourselves, ostrichlike, by believing that sin, sickness, and death exist only in false thinking.

In the face of such facts can we still believe in a good God? In any way that we try to account for evil in the world the undeniable fact of its existence remains. No honest and rational theory whatever gets rid of the fact. Nor do we derive any help on such problems by denying or debasing our idea of God. The problem of evil is more tolerable if we hold to the belief in a good God, even though that be beset with difficulties. There are, however, certain truths held by Christianity which help us to a better understanding of this problem of evil.

First, as has been pointed out in a previous chapter, Christianity looks upon the world as in the making. A better world is on ahead. In an unfinished world like ours many things are bound to be imperfect. The best is yet to be.

In the second place, Christianity believes in a God of purpose, who is working definitely toward a goal, the shaping of a better world, in which his own nature will be more largely and genuinely expressed, a world wherein will dwell righteousness, love, and peace.

In the third place, Christianity looks upon suffering as having certain beneficent values. Pain serves to protect the organism against injury. Without its warning cry man is in danger of self-destruction. Struggle is essential to achievement, and struggle often means pain and distress. It is not easy to climb to the summit of perfection.

In the fourth place, Christianity believes that sin, the chief evil of the moral world, can be cured. The new life in Christ is the remedy for moral failure. We believe in the coming of the kingdom[5] of God on the earth and are working together with God to establish it.

Such a God can be trusted even in the dark, even when reason cannot see to the end of the trail of the divinely ordered life. Besides, we are reminded that the greater part of evil is the moral evil of life, for which wrong or

[5] See Chapter XI.

evil choices are responsible. If we were always wise and good enough to choose the right and were sure to build our social structure upon righteousness and love, then misfortune, sorrow, and suffering would almost disappear from the earth. So the Christian way of meeting evil, in whatever form, is in the intelligent conviction that goodness is stronger than evil, and that good is slowly but surely coming to triumph over evil. Where we cannot see we learn to trust.

Can prayer to God change anything?—One of my pupils once said to me in a class in theism, "I wish you would tell us what we are to do with God after we believe in him."

My answer was: "God is worth to you only as much as the use you make of him in your daily needs. Use him; pray to him; commune with him; fellowship with him; treat God as a living, loving Presence."

To Jesus prayer was talking with God, communion with his Father. To-day, feeling the force of the natural sciences, men are eagerly asking, "Can prayer change anything in my favor?"

At times even Christians are affected in their prayer life by popular fads of thought which tend to reduce God to a vague essence, filling all space, or to a vast power mechanically evolving things, or to blind natural law, rigidly ruling the world. In these modern tendencies personality easily vanishes; and communion, if it exists at all, becomes mere self-reflection, which is taken as a substitute for prayer to the personal God. Merely to contemplate the vast unknown or to "concentrate" narrowly upon the "encircling Good" is not to communicate with the loving Father.

Or the modern perplexity may take the form of the question whether a personal God can change anything at the behest of the worshiper, seeing that natural law governs all things.

The answer should be that there is no reign of law independent of God. The laws of nature are best understood as his habitual way of acting and the expression of his creative purposiveness.

Now, even natural law shows varied results with

changed conditions. The spiritual law of personality is superior to mechanical laws of nature, and even we may change results by personal effort. We can change a river's current or stop a falling object by will and intention.

When we pray to God we modify the conditions of personal relations and call new forces of friendliness into play. Prayer expands the soul and opens the way to the spiritual order, that precious blessings or needed power may be released in our behalf, not in a capricious manner, but in keeping with the law of persons. This is clearly true of spiritual values if we regard prayer as more than begging for things we want. Prayer, therefore, is the beating heart of religion.

Jesus furnishes us with the best example of the highest expression of the prayer life and shows it to be essentially a matter of communion and fellowship with God. The question of getting things changed according to our desires becomes of lesser importance when prayer is viewed as essentially communion with God, since under such a consideration the important element is the change of our will to be brought into harmony with his divine and all-wise will. With this change in our spirit God can trust us with more things and larger opportunities. This kind of prayer really changes things. Nowhere is this attitude better illustrated than in the third petition of the Lord's Prayer and in his prayer in the garden: "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22. 42).

Thought Questions

1. Why do men believe in God?
2. In what particular essentials does the Christian view of God differ from that of other living religions?
3. What light do the personality and teaching of Jesus shed on our idea of God?
4. What is unique in Jesus' ideas of God?
5. Why do modern men find it difficult to believe in a personal God?
6. Which is the more important: correct doctrine about God, or a living experience of his presence in one's life?
7. How can finite man be in fellowship with the infinite God?

Suggested Readings

What It Means to Be a Christian, Bosworth, Chapters II and III.

The Productive Beliefs, Hough, Chapters I and V.

Christian Faith for Men of To-day, Cook, Chapter IV.

What We Believe, Parker, Chapter I.

CHAPTER V

THE JESUS OF HISTORY

MAN'S most pressing need, undeniably, is that of the clearest revelation and greatest power of perfect life. Personal example, personal fellowship, and personal power inspire and sustain most in the perilous venture of the higher life.

Christianity is the religion of a matchless Person. Our Christian faith centers in the religion of Jesus Christ. He is humanity's clearest view of the unseen God. In Jesus, God has come nearest and become clearest to the understanding of man. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14. 9). Christianity thus presents religion at its best because it holds in its perpetual imaging the perfect Person, Jesus Christ. What, then, are the facts about Jesus on which we base our beliefs?

THE MAN JESUS

Our Christian faith is founded on verifiable facts of history. That Jesus taught and wrought substantially as the Gospels narrate is nowhere seriously questioned. That Jesus crossed the Jordan is as well attested historically as that Washington crossed the Delaware. The historic reality of Jesus has determined the elements of Christian experience and life, and it has held and holds the Christian faith steady.

Foreshadowings of his coming.—For a long period of more than three hundred years priests and prophets of Israel gave revealing glimpses of a coming deliverer, a God-empowered agent. This ideal for the future of Israel was gathered up in the hoped for Messiah.

This hope was more than a dream of a secure political state: it was in the nature of a fervid religious expectation that God would come to his people as a temporal and spiritual deliverer. The glowing messages of Isaiah had looked forward to the coming of Immanuel, "God

with us," as the great hope of his people. The long, lingering, anxious years of national misfortune only intensified the hope of the coming of God's anointed, the Messiah of God, who should deliver his people.

When Jesus finally appeared in the flesh, the Jewish people were steeped in the passionate belief that the Messiah was about to come. John the Baptist gave his flaming voice to the national hope, and Jesus responded to it at the hour of his baptism. But no seer could fully picture such a perfect spiritual Messiah as Jesus actually proved to be, who meant to release his people from their formal, narrow, materialistic outlook on life. He proved to be more than the fulfillment of the most idealistic hopes of the past and the answer to the loftiest dreams of the seers.

The earthly fact of Jesus.—The religion called Christian had its humble origin in a historic reality—the person of Jesus. He is the crowning fact of history. The facts of his life are simple but significant. The salient Gospel facts are easily stated. Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea; he grew to manhood in the town of Nazareth; he was instructed in the home of Joseph and Mary, his parents, and educated in the synagogue school of his town; he worked at the trade of a carpenter. Under the spell of the message of John the Baptist he answered the call of God to become the Messianic Deliverer and was baptized of John in the Jordan. On the heels of this momentous experience, which meant to him God's call to his Messianic career, Jesus found himself facing a series of stormy temptations that drove him into the solitude of a desert place. The forty lonely, bitter days of temptation in the wilderness graphically portray the inward spiritual struggle through which he must pass in order to make clear to himself what a Messiah of God must be and do. In that personal conflict with the powers of evil Jesus found the way of God. It was made sun clear to him that he could not win by the working of miracles, nor by an appeal to the bread-and-butter level of life, nor yet by the way of compromise of principles; he could win only by trust and confidence in God's truth and by genuine personal worth and hard

work. Spiritual appeals must be made on the spiritual level of life. God's ideal must win on its own full merit or not at all. That seemed to Jesus to be God's way, and it is the only sure way.

In keeping with this decision Jesus, during his public ministry, simply "went about doing good." He healed the sick; taught the multitude, who heard him gladly; ministered to the poor, heartened the discouraged, recovered the lost, firmly and roundly condemned the flagrant abuses of his day, and urged men everywhere to seek earnestly the kingdom of God and its righteousness.

The freshness and originality, the simplicity and clearness, the charm and genuineness, of Jesus' teaching and ministry aroused not only popular enthusiasm but official opposition. After a few eventful years of unselfish ministry he was put to death by his enemies and reported by his friends to have come forth from the grave and ascended on high from whence he had come.

This, in brief, is the Gospel record of the deathless life of the Founder of the best of earth's religions. He succeeded, however, in stamping upon his followers the picture of a perfect life. In this definite historic event the earliest Christians recognized not only a great teacher and prophet of God but more—the Saviour of mankind. They, like all succeeding Christians, made him *central* in their religious lives.

This abiding faith in Jesus as the divinely appointed Saviour of men, which the church has always held, finds its ultimate ground in the fact of this lasting impression made by his unique personality. Jesus first lived himself into the heart and mind of his followers, and subsequently, through the meager records of the Gospels, a similar impression was made on all succeeding generations of the church. What was there in Jesus' life and ministry that could make such a telling impression upon the church?

The public ministry of Jesus.—The public ministry of Jesus must have extended over a brief period of from one and a half to three years. Following, in the main, the outline drawn from the first three Gospels, the ministry of Jesus covers (1) a brief, early Judean period (John 2

to 4), (2) an extended ministry in Galilee (Mark 1. 14 to 7. 23), (3) an important ministry in Peræa (Luke 9 to 19), and (4) the final events in Jerusalem (Mark 10 to 12). The most searching modern criticism has assured us of the general trustworthiness of the Gospel accounts of Jesus, and the closest literary analysis of biblical documents has established the essential historical facts of Jesus' words and works.

Jesus began his ministry in Judea as a humble Teacher. The kingdom of God was his principal theme. In accepting his Messiahship, Jesus looked upon the new kingdom as a new spiritual and ethical order grounded in personal love and righteousness. The great obstacle to Jesus' work was the popular expectation of an earthly realm and the widespread ignorance and sin of his age. Consequently, the most immediate task before him consisted in correcting the false popular idea about the kingdom. For example, he opened his ministry with "the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe in the gospel"—good news (Mark 1. 15). To Nicodemus he said that entrance to the kingdom is from above (John 3. 1-21) and to the woman at the well that it is "the gift of God" (John 4. 5-26). Thus, from the beginning Jesus was deeply conscious of the spiritual nature of his mission and the need of simple teaching.

During the Galilean period, gathering a group of disciples about him, Jesus proclaimed the coming and the nature of the kingdom of God—the new age of the reign of God upon the earth. He urged upon all a change of heart and will. His words were intensified by his works of healing, which manifested depths of sympathy and extraordinary power. Political and ecclesiastical interference finally defeated his ministry in Galilee, which ministry had spread over the whole country, meeting with popular acceptance. Popular preaching had failed to secure the desired results. The multitude listened to his parables, was attracted to his person, and was astonished at his wonderworks, but could not grasp the fuller and deeper spiritual message that he desired to give.

The third period of Jesus' work consisted in his withdrawal from a popular preaching and healing ministry in

Galilee and taking the twelve chosen disciples into retirement for the purpose of instilling into them his own fine spirit and spiritual ideas. He must be certain that the Twelve grasp clearly and convincingly the new meaning that he gave to religion and life.

At Cæsarea Philippi a new crisis in Jesus' ministry was reached. Here, at last, Jesus put his followers to the test. "Who say ye that I am?" "Thou art the Christ" was Peter's answer (Mark 8. 29). His own moral and spiritual life at close range had brought them to see that the hope of mankind lay in himself, in what he was and in what he stood for.

During the hurried Peræan ministry of the last few months of his earthly life Jesus taught much in discourses and parables which dealt principally with God's concern for the lost (Luke 15. 1-32), the peril of spiritual unreadiness (Matt. 25. 1-13), the glory of service (Luke 10. 30-37), the self-destructiveness of a selfish life (Luke 12. 16-21), the evil of uselessness (Luke 13. 6-9), the folly of materializing life (Luke 12. 16-21), acceptable worship (Luke 18. 9-14), the reward of faithful service (Matt. 20), warnings against vanity (Luke 11. 43-44), excuses (Luke 14. 16-24), ambition (Mark 10. 35-45), hypocrisy (Luke 12. 1-12), unforgiving spirit (Luke 17. 1-4), and the evil of divorce (Mark 10. 2-12). These discourses and parables formed an important part of Jesus' training of the Twelve. He sought to give new and higher spiritual meaning to the whole range of life.

As Jesus neared Jerusalem for the last encounter to win or lose he well knew that he must give his life for the cause of God to which he had devoted himself. He began at this time to prepare the disciples for his death. He must teach them the hard lesson that to play the rôle of Messiah would mean suffering and death (Mark 8. 33), that the way to win is to die, that the way of service and sacrifice is the road to Messianic victory, that in his death he could win.

The tragic death of Jesus.—Jesus died as he had lived, faithful to his task. He was accused of blasphemy by the Jews and put to death by the Roman authorities (John 19. 7). All who were connected with his death were im-

pressed by his extraordinary person. Both friend and foe recognized in him unusual power and fineness of personality. The Christian Church has always held that the death of Jesus revealed to the utmost the sacrificial love of God. Thus, the life, teaching, and sacrificial death of Jesus constitute a service of love that bears upon the personal relationship between God and man.

The triumphant reappearance.—The disciples believed their crucified Master alive. They testified to having seen him repeatedly. All doubt about Jesus' Messiahship vanished with their belief in his resurrection. They found the tomb empty. "He is not here; he is risen" was the apostolic slogan, which has been caught up wherever Easter is celebrated.

Certain it is that the disciples had some kind of experience with Jesus after his death, whatever might have been its inner nature, which firmly convinced them that he had survived death and the grave and is ever more alive, the exalted Lord of life.

The Teacher From God

Jesus Christ is easily the great Teacher of all ages. A Jewish scholar pronounced him "a teacher come from God," and the Christian centuries have accepted this verdict. His teaching came with the direct authority of self-evident truth and for that reason carried universal significance. He dealt with the larger matters of human life and destiny.

A new emphasis in religion.—Jesus imparted to religion a perpetual freshness. He injected the note of naturalness into the religious life. One could go to one's heavenly Father as to a good friend. God was eager to meet his children. No set ritual or prescribed ceremony was deemed essential in order to gain the ear of God. He made the matter of being religious an everyday concern, as natural as breathing and eating.

Jesus satisfies our craving for a life that can make sure of God. God was ever present in his thoughts. He lived a life that was always sure of God. Men need God more than they need daily bread. Jesus never dropped God

out of his thoughts or feelings or actions. He did his will, cooperated with his plans, and enlisted in his cause from first to last.

Jesus brought a note of gladness into religion. The history of religions is marked by gloom, austerity, and fear. Jesus injected joy and sunshine into religious experience. The spiritual life is the blessed life (Matt. 5. 2-12). The religion of Jesus fully satisfies our human desire for a simple, useful, happy life.

A new standard of ethics.—Jesus satisfies our craving for moral certainty and clear principles governing common duty. He did not commit the mistake of the Pharisee in making minute rules to cover every specific moral situation. He gave the supreme law of love to cover all strained situations, the Father's will as a guide to the application of love, and human welfare as the measure of one's love in daily duty.

Of course, merely loving one's neighbor does not always insure right action or perfect uniformity of conduct, but it gives the right motive from which to regulate the moral life in the complexity of modern society. A certain freedom, elasticity, and happiness of daily living are made possible by such a motive force.

Gauging conduct by deep inner motives and broad universal principles may give rise to temporary confusion and misapplication; but the attempt to apply the law of love in our common life will in the end make for a kind of practical uniformity that is real and useful, and not the arbitrary uniformity of set rules.

A new note of freedom.—Jesus insured a new freedom to life. He himself declared for freedom of thought, speech, and action. He would not be bound by traditions, customs, or the hollow conventions of society. He criticized them freely where they seemed to him useless or proved a hindrance to the common good. He sought truth wherever he could find it, omitted such conventions as were meaningless, and criticized the endless trivialities of ritual common to his time. The measure of all things is its fitness to serve human welfare.

Thus, Jesus steps out of the entanglements of history and captures us of modern times with the living fresh-

ness of his personality. We simply feel him and yield to his persuasive moral presence and power over us.

Thought Questions

1. What kind of a Messiah deliverer was looked for in the Old Testament?
2. In what respects was Jesus different and better than the best foreshadowings about him?
3. What are the main facts of Jesus' earthly life?
4. What lasting impression did Jesus' earthly career make upon his followers?
5. Outline the public ministry of Jesus.
6. What hard lesson must Jesus teach his disciples about his coming death?
7. What new emphasis did Jesus bring into religion and ethics?
8. Why was it necessary for Jesus to die?
9. Why has the death of Jesus saving worth for us to-day?
10. What was the nature of Jesus' resurrection?

Suggested Readings

Introduction to the Life of Christ, Hill, Chapters X, XI, XII.
New Testament History, Rall, Chapters III–XX.
The Life and Teachings of Jesus, Kent.
The Jesus of History, Glover.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHRIST OF THEOLOGY AND EXPERIENCE

The most important fact of the Jesus of history is that he has become the Christ of experience. But the one is not to be taken as a pure abstraction of the other. In the lives of men the knowledge of the Jesus of history unites with the experiencing of the Christ: hence the expression "Jesus the Christ."

Jesus must be more than a historic Person: he must become a vital, living experience in men's lives. He means much to the church and to the world to-day as a historic Person, as the Teacher and Revealer of great truths; but he means more as his superb spirit passes over into the hearts of men, where his great good life is relived. This is the Christ of experience.

The Christ We Experience

Christians have always appealed to Jesus the Christ as their central hope, their chief Helper, their way to God, their power in the new life, their supreme authority, their human-divine Saviour. Christ becomes of significance to us only as we daily live his teachings and experience him as ours.

The acid test of a Christian.—Once the disciples followed the Jesus of history in real, personal contact. We cannot have Jesus with us in that form now; our only way to have Jesus is to experience his spirit. We can live in the confidence, greatness, sufficiency, and completeness of his ethical and religious spirit. The exalted Christ of unseen spiritual presence in the world is believed by the church to be the Giver of the Spirit of God to those who have faith in his Messiahship (Rom. 6. 4; 7. 4; 8. 2).

Here, then, we find the acid test of Christians. Do they as a matter of fact walk and work and worship, play and barter, serve and sacrifice, in the same spirit of

loyalty and love to God's will which characterized the life of Jesus? If one is wanting in this spirit of Jesus he may have all else—firm faith in "orthodox fundamentals," fine loyalty to church services, commendable liberality in giving,—yet fail miserably in having Christ in his experience. Here—and nowhere else—in the living expression of Jesus' spirit is to be found the beating heart of Christianity.

If one has these soul qualities of Jesus he has the Christ. He may lack many other things that the church often treats as fundamental and still be essentially Christian. He who, like a Luther or a Wesley or a Tolstoy, however differently they may interpret Jesus' words, in downright sincerity of spirit strives to follow in the footsteps of Jesus is a Christian. It is not identity of interpretation but spirit that is the test of discipleship.

The spirit of the Christ.—On the part of intelligent Christians there is now in this modern world a definite habit of mind that nothing matters so much as the actual possession and expression of the spirit of Jesus. What, then, is that spirit? It is the spirit of love, loyalty, and service. Although it has often been obscured by creeds and rituals it has nevertheless found its expression in the noblest lives of the church throughout the ages. In this manner the Jesus of history has come over as the Christ of experience, as the Master of men's lives, the Lord of their souls, the supreme Teacher of our common life, and the one dominant force for real good in the world.

It is the installation of this spirit more than all else which makes men Christian to-day. He who actually possesses the genuine attitude of love, loyalty, and service revealed in Jesus has in his life the Christ of experience. An unembarrassed spiritual loyalty to Jesus in this sense is the only type of Christianity which is likely to command permanent respect in the estimate of the collective mind of Christendom. "But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom. 8. 9).

The Christ of the Ages

In Christ is pictured humanity's perfect Ideal, Teacher,

and Redeemer. Consequently, Christianity lays claim to elements that seem to be true anywhere, everywhere, and at all times. The outstanding claims of Christianity, in their essential truths, are so high and perfect that it is difficult for Christians to believe that they will be outgrown or surpassed by future discoveries on the part of man.

The answer to age-long needs.—The permanence of Jesus cannot rest merely upon any external claims of his heredity, manner of birth, or metaphysical nature as such. These may be very true, but not always clear—certainly not the most advantageous starting point for our thinking. Here we must pass from airy speculation to practical facts of history and men's experience. The supreme test of Jesus Christ is in his ability to meet men's fullest experiences of the moral and spiritual needs in every age. His perfect personality, masterful teachings, fundamental agreements with truth, and richness of ministration to human needs have made him indispensable to every age—to this age as to all others—and he satisfies to the fullest man's moral and religious demands wherever he is honestly and genuinely tried.

The vast changes of our time have not left Jesus behind. What we moderns emphasize most Jesus stressed long ago: a search for reality, a passion for truth, life, the importance of social service, and confidence in the future. No one has ever stressed these qualities of human demands more than did Jesus.

He worded his teachings and taught in such broad and fundamental terms of human needs that, although he revealed the Jewish life and background against which his words were uttered, he nevertheless portrayed almost nothing as provincial, local, or peculiar to that far-off past. His teachings reveal essential principles upon which human life must ever build, no matter how many changes occur. What he gave as basic to man's needs in his time rests back upon human nature and is vital to present needs. It can be adapted to any condition of man.

Jesus' teachings are grounded in eternal truth and unfold everlasting principles undergirding human nature itself. Not a little that Socrates, Plato, Aristotle,

Augustine, Luther, and Wesley thought has become obsolete. These were among humanity's greatest and wisest teachers, yet they have fallen behind the march of progress in many respects. Not so with Jesus Christ. The more men live and try out his utterances in life, the surer they appear. Is it not amazing that one should have been able so to speak and teach twenty centuries ago and still to be up to date? Jesus is perpetually modern. He abides forever. He endures all tests.

The enduring ideal.—Upon what rests this perpetual claim of his centrality? It rests primarily upon the completeness of his personality. When we think of a perfect cube or a perfect globe we can conceive of no more perfect geometric figure. It satisfies our cravings for perfection. We can neither think of nor wish for anything straighter than a perfectly straight line. In the same way, when we try to think of moral perfection or spiritual excellence, Jesus' personality satisfies completely (Eph. 4. 13).

For a more complete life of man than this we cannot hope. We cannot aspire to express a deeper love than that of Jesus. He never exhibits any trace of consciousness of sin. Jesus knew no moral defeat. He lived a life of unfailing moral victory. He maintained an unbroken fellowship with God the Father. Jesus rendered unflagging obedience to God's will in every particular. To the bitter end he held to his ideal of life, and suffered death in its behalf. He lived a perpetual life of sacrificial service to the needs of man. Thinking with unerring straightness and fundamental simplicity, he had in every discussion a way of seizing upon that which was central in every issue.

This is well illustrated in his discourses. The entire Old Testament is summarized by Jesus in a single utterance (Matt. 22. 36-40) which makes love to God and loving service to man the essence of religion. The center of recovery for the lost is the changed will. The prodigal son is made to say, "I *will* . . . go to my father" (Luke 15. 18), and he rises and goes. The center of the prayer life is God's willingness to help his earthly children (Matt. 6. 7, 8). Good deeds rest back upon a life

made good at the heart. The blackest of sins is the wrong inner attitude. Loveless, useless, insincere attitudes condemn man to outer darkness. To love is to live. To serve is to love in practice. To be sincere is the primary requisite to salvation. Thus, both in life and teaching is Jesus, to the Christian, supreme and perfect. For us Christ is ultimate in the essential moral and religious ideal. His ideal is an enduring ideal.

The Christ of the church.—In view of what has been said above, the consequent function of the Christian Church must always be to preach Christ to men, teach the facts of Jesus' life to children, meet human problems in the spirit of Jesus, seek to interpret social life in the light of Jesus' principles, win all mankind to a ready, eager, and understanding way of Jesus Christ's program for life and conduct, and strive to interpret Jesus' way in vital, actual working power in the changing life of this straining time in which men now live. Church of the living Christ, move forward in more adequate interpretation, finer conduct, and richer social living!

The Christ of Theology

What men value supremely they talk and think about most. The experience called Christian has been rich and full, and in every century has wrought vast changes for the better in both individual and social life. Christian theology, therefore, has striven to understand systematically and explain the elements involved in Christian life. But the explanations offered in one age will not fully satisfy the growing minds of a later age, which is living under new and enlarged conditions. Life is growing and changing; therefore, explanations about life and its interests must undergo modifications. Hence, each age must construct its own theology to fit its own peculiar interests.

The making of doctrines has been greatly influenced by the general social conditions existing in any given period of history. This situation from time to time disturbs established doctrines, and doubt, controversy, and reconstruction inevitably take place. Thus, the doctrines

of Christianity have proved most useful when they have been so modified as to harmonize with developing civilization. Since our age is thoroughly scientific, eagerly democratic, and keenly efficient, the doctrines of Christianity must appreciate these characteristics in order to be truly successful in idealizing and spiritualizing modern life.

The lower and higher views.—While Jesus Christ is the supreme fact of Christian history, the moving spirit of Christian life, and the regulating ideal for human conduct, thoughtful men in the Christian ranks have brought us different meanings concerning these facts. While all acknowledge the moral and spiritual mastery of Jesus over their lives, men of intelligence and candor have made different evaluations of his personality. These estimates fall into what might be called the lower and the higher views.

The one views him as only a Man, though the best of men, manifesting, in an unusual manner, characteristic qualities of God above other men, making him the best and wisest of men; the other estimate regards him as more than a man, as being possessed of a divine-human personality. This higher view beholds him living as other men but free from moral taint, sees him working as other men work but with a godlike touch, observes him subject to human conditions yet miraculously transcending them, finds him baffled by the problems of his age yet sowing the seeds of a new social order for the ages, witnesses him dying as a malefactor yet rising like a god. Upon such contrasting facts of Jesus' life has the higher view been based.

The heart of Christian belief has always been that God and man are happily united in Jesus Christ, revealing the character of God in a perfect human experience. In the actual picture that the average Christian has of Christ the human and divine elements in his nature present no more difficulty than the union of body and soul in ourselves. The difficulty appears when speculation becomes too minute and seeks to penetrate the mystery of such a personality as that of Jesus.

Christ's incarnate life.—The historic person of Jesus Christ has been a perpetual puzzle to theological thought.

But Christianity cannot live merely on the historic facts; it must seek the rational interpretation of its facts. Theology is that attempt. Christians are concerned with the ideal meaning of its great historic facts, and the value of those facts in making and maintaining Christian life, for the spirit of the past must flow, like a living current, into the present. However, the world is saved not by great ideas alone but by great persons in whom those ideas take root, form an ideal, and in whom they are personally championed in blazing conviction. Hence, the power in Christianity has been the power of a great Life revealing God. If God reveals himself in history, the fullness of that revelation is seen in the historic person of Jesus. Belief in this revelation is belief in the incarnation. If God is moral he can only fully reveal his moral character in a perfect Person who can experience a human life to the full. Jesus Christ is that one. This revelation of God in the human experience of Jesus is important.

There appears to be a widespread tendency to-day among influential and loyal Christian leaders to place less importance upon the God-man's manner of entering the world and more upon his divine-human uniqueness and redemptive service in the world. Such modern leaders do believe that Jesus, the Christ, is uniquely divine as well as fully human in his nature, and find their support of this belief, not in any manner of his coming into the world, but in his manner of living in it after he arrived. Jesus' supreme and perfect personality and divineness of character seem to them to support the miraculous story of his birth more than the story to support his supernatural personality. The thing of primary importance to Christians is to recognize the full value of Jesus' divine life shining through his earthly human career. When men believe in him and hold fast to his teachings they are safe.

However, there are many who feel that they must have a speculative explanation of his divine-human personality, and that Luke's miraculous account is essential to belief in his divinity. To them the Gospel account of the virgin birth is vastly important. Moreover, it is chaste and

credible and not out of keeping with his divine-human personality.

Others, while freely according to all the right to hold this opinion, object to making belief in the virgin birth the supreme test of discipleship for all others. They hold that those who cannot accept that account as either necessary or sufficiently verified historically, but who live in his spirit, are entitled to be called Christians.

The incarnate life of the Son of God was not chiefly a physical event but primarily a moral process expressive of the love of God, who so loved the world that he poured his own best self into a human life that man might behold in fleshly form the loving heart of the Eternal. The towering significance of the incarnation is that Jesus is the divine indwelling in humanity.

Christ's atoning death.—The death of Jesus is indelibly impressed upon the church by the large place it holds in the Gospels and in Christian theology and preaching. Why does it occupy this large place? Because sacrifice is the highest expression of one's devotion to a cause. The death of Jesus has been a source of vast human benefit. The cross has become the Christian symbol. In various figures of speech the cross is set forth as a signal source of spiritual power (John 3. 14; 10. 11; 12. 24, 32).

The Gospels impress us with the stupendous fact of the loving sacrifice made upon the cross and its universal importance in the saving of sinful men (John 10. 17). When needful every good shepherd gives his life for the sheep (John 10. 11). The grain of corn must die to give life to new harvests (John 12. 24). Here is recognized the universal law of sacrifice for the good of others. It is a law of life itself. Whoever gives his life in the interest of a good cause is in a sense a savior.

Why, then, does the death of Jesus mean more to mankind than the death of any other good man? Because he, being the greatest of men, had the most to give, and because he himself is more than others, more than mere man: he is the God-man. We can never get to the heart of Jesus until we understand the experience that took him to the cross. That is where the human experience of

Jesus expresses the fullness of his boundless love for man, his undeviating devotion to God's cause, his unshaken confidence in God's way, his vibrant sympathy for human need.

We see, then, why the death of Jesus was inevitable: he was not dying that his spilled blood might cleanse men's souls in some magic way; but in his death he was paying the price of bringing such ideals to men as would serve not only as a pattern but as a stimulus in man's struggle for fullness of life, for neither he nor anyone else could give such ideas and live such a life in this imperfect world and champion the cause of God without having to pay with his life. Christians commonly believe that Christ's death is the highest expression of the universal principle of self-giving operative in all life. Because Jesus stands as humanity's perfect Person—Christ, the Son of God—is his death of supreme significance. In this tragic event Jesus revealed the amazing bigness of God's love for man and the measureless meanness of men's sin. It is love's utmost sacrifice raised to the divine level.

Christ's risen life.—"The resurrection of Christ," says Snowden, "is the rock on which rests the central column that sustains the whole structure of historic Christianity."[1] Paul preached of old: "If Christ hath not been raised, then is our preaching vain" (1 Cor. 15. 14). The resurrection was a fitting climax to the superb life Jesus lived and the sublime sacrifice he made for the cause of human redemption. It has universal significance for fullness of life here and for life everlasting. The great and good cannot perish. They live evermore. And the risen Christ is to the church a truly victorious and ever-living Lord.

Thought Questions

1. What factors enter in to make Jesus the Christ of the ages?
2. Which is the more important—Jesus' teaching or his life?
3. What does it really mean to believe in Jesus Christ?
4. In what sense does belief in Jesus save?

[1] *Basal Beliefs of Christianity*, The Macmillan Company, page 133.

5. What distinction is to be made between the Jesus of history and the Christ of experience?
6. Why do we acknowledge Jesus' authority over life?
7. What is the saving value of Jesus' death on the cross?
8. Why is the possession of the spirit of Christ the one essential matter?

Suggested Readings

Why I Believe in Religion, Brown, Chapters II, III.
The Creative Christ, Brown, Chapters II, III.
The Contemporary Christ, Gray, Chapter X.

CHAPTER VII

MAN AND HIS MAKING

"THERE are no abstract adventures in this world," says David Grayson, "but only your adventure and my adventure, and it is only as we come to know a man that we can see how wonderful his life has been."[1]

Human nature is past finding out. Modern psychology has revealed something of the mysterious and complex life of the world within. Our inner selves are modified with every changing experience. Sociology has shown us that radically different environments tend to produce their corresponding types of character. City and rural men differ. Changing conditions throw us into new moods. Sickness, cold, and poverty dampen the spirit. We seem to be in no small degree playthings of circumstance.

On the other hand, we seem to possess powers that defy the forces about us and help us rise above the obstacles piled up before us. To reach a goal we choose, struggle, hold to ideals, and carry on down through the years. Man is indeed a many-sided being possessed of measureless possibilities for good or bad. He is an actor within his environment as well as a reflector of his environment. He makes and is made by circumstances.

MAN IN THE MAKING

Man in the making is a moral adventure. We must attempt to understand man in his real nature to appreciate his behavior, for his failures, regrets, and recoveries are phases of himself that imply vital changes within his living nature. A better understanding of man and of his larger relations to God and to his world will throw fresh light on the puzzling problems of man's making, unmaking, or remaking.

Man as he is.—What, then, is man? Biology says that

[1] *Great Possessions*, Doubleday, Page & Company, page 126.

man is an animal, and it classifies him as a mammal. Evolution credits man with having fought his way to the top of the animal line. Psychology finds in his brain superior activity that enables him to invent tools with which to meet difficult situations. The social sciences regard him as a social animal that is capable of living with others in quite a superior manner.

Religion, however, says that this superior animal is something more—that he is a creature of the eternities, that he is a spiritual being made for the company of God.

Christianity accepts the facts that man has an animal base, is bound by earth-drawn tendencies, is tempted to live on the brute level, sometimes wallows in the mire of his baser instincts; but Christianity goes further and higher in its estimate of man. It holds that man is a son of God, that the dust of the animal was inbreathed with the soul of divinity, that he lives his little span of time but moves on to immortality, that above the hunger of the animal for bread there rages the hunger of the spirit that drives him to feed on words of life. "I am the bread of life," said Jesus (John 6. 35), and millions feed on him at this hour and are satisfied. The beast in man lives for the moment; the best in him lives for eternity. The fires of his lusts are outflamed by the light of his conscience. There is a microscopic view of man; there is a telescopic view of him. Through the microscope he appears a crawling, wriggling worm; through the telescope he appears a son of God. The lower view says, "Dust thou art"; the higher view says, "A soul thou art."

Neither view is complete. The truth that Christianity teaches about man is that, along with the fear and weakness of the animal, there is hidden, as it were, a tiny spiritual fiber in him which we call a soul, capable of vibrating to the radio messages of God. Therein lies the confidence that there is in him a capacity for God which connects his little life with the great life. Man is psycho-physical. He responds to two sets of stimuli—material and spiritual—and is at home in both worlds.

Man as he ought to be.—Obviously the central problem

of man is to achieve the better self. Nothing short of this finer, higher, godlike achievement will satisfy him. He must struggle upward out of the animal into the spiritual world. He is daily striving to grow the man which he hopes to be. God aids him in becoming what he ought to be. Only as he works to be what he prays to become is God's grace operative; or, in the words of the well-known adage, "The Lord helps those who help themselves." For example, to appreciate a beautiful painting I at least must open my eyes to look at it; my looking does not change the picture; it is there whether I look at it or no; but it becomes meaningful for me only as I help myself to its beauty. The same principle holds true in the spiritual realm. The inner desire for a new self proves the capacity to achieve it. What man longs to be is what he can be by the grace of God. He believes he ought to reach the higher levels of character, where he may live on the other side of weakness and defeat. Homer represents the great Greek mythical hero Ulysses as forever roaming about the world with a hungry heart and a restless mind. That is the epitome of human nature on its ideal side.

Nothing is more certain than the fact that man is here in this world to realize his biggest possibility. The Scriptures and all earnest teachers of our time unite in a plea for the growth of finer souls. That the human soul is the supreme fact of the world all are agreed. The growing of beautiful souls in the likeness of Christ is the resistless dream of the Christian Church. Christianity undertakes to make this dream a reality. That is its chief effort.

Man and His Inheritance

"A man is what he is primarily because he is a member of a certain family, sex, and race. Those three factors give him his inheritance, his capital, his stock in trade, and these birthday gifts bound his ultimate achievement."[2] Man, then, is pushed into life laden with gifts from his ancestors. Certain individual traits are the inheritance of a long, long life history of the family stock.

[2] *The Psychology of Childhood*, Norsworthy and Whitley, The Macmillan Company, page 18.

These facts are of the most far-reaching importance in the making of the individual. "No training and no external influence can entirely supersede the inborn tendencies."[3]

Man as a product of the past.—All is not made by *our* choices. We have come out of the long past. Instincts, impulses, racial traits, and unexplained tendencies are all carried forward and handed along to posterity. Heredity is a scientifically verified fact. Tendencies that a long racial history has forged to make our start favorable or unfavorable are ours at birth.

There is no doubt that it is this amazing fact of our nature which has given rise to the older doctrines of "inherited depravity," "original sin," and the supposed "evil state of the natural man." Though these particular doctrines are now unpopular, they find their deeper facts reappearing in the modern doctrine of physical heredity and the social inheritance. So also in the moral conscience something of human good or ill does carry across from one generation to another, not, as some hold, in the form of ready-made sin, but as latent tendencies easily stirred into good or bad conduct.

Man as a free person.—Christianity holds that man is a free spirit; that he is—not has—a soul; that he is essentially a free agent, and not merely a sum of psychic states; that he does not simply have his choices determined for him; and that he is active, not passive, in his experiences.

Despite the fact that there are certain hereditary elements which have necessarily conditioned the possibility of man's development, he is nevertheless to be treated as a free spirit, a responsible moral agent, accountable for his conduct, and rewarded or condemned for his choice of a good or bad career in life.

Hence, the Christian can never long hold, without serious embarrassment, a passive view of human nature—the view that man is merely a passive recipient of either good or evil. Man is by nature a go-getter. The prodigal must "will," "arise," and "go" unto his Father; then the Father meets him, forgives him, restores him, respirits

[3] *Psychology: General and Applied*, Muensterberg, page 236.

him. Man, then, is a conscious, choosing person, responsible for his conduct according to the measure of his capacity.

Man's moral failure.—There is obviously the imperfection, the damage of sin. Man fails of his best. He falls short of his loftiest hopes. Between man's reality and ideal there appears to be a great gulf fixed. As he must learn to walk without falling and crawling so he must learn to live without moral failure. By the road of the ideal he climbs to sonship beside his heavenly Father. God and man meet in religion. To rise above the animal and live on the spiritual level is the God-given task of the human struggle. From the animal to the human within us is a dizzy distance, mostly perpendicular in direction. This double aspect of man makes life a noble adventure.

The disturbing fact of sin is that it roots in life itself. Hence, it is humanity-wide. Religion faces this ugly fact of sin. Crime disturbs the wide, wide world with its evil deeds. Whether or not it is true that all are tainted with criminal impulses, the temptation to go wrong is universal. In the midst of moral failure we live, move, and have our being. This is a fact as certain as death, as conquering as war, as mysterious as life. Moral defeat is as universal as it is damaging. Christianity recognizes this stubborn fact and makes deadly war on sin. It copes with moral failure at its source.

Biology carries the problem of sin back into the secret hereditary laws of life. Crime in large part, it tells us, is inherited degeneracy. Out of every 100,000 United States recruits during the Great War, 2,340 were rejected because their mental capacities were so low that there was no place for them.[4] These figures, however, do not show the numbers of all those with neural disorders, but only those cases serious enough to merit rejection from the army. Bernard Glueck, director of the psychiatric clinic of Sing Sing Prison, writes, in his article "Concerning Prisoners," that out of 608 consecutive criminal cases studied 359, or 58.9 per cent, were due to neurotic

[4] *Manual of Psychiatry*, Rosanoff, page 192.

taints.[5] Here, then, are the appalling facts that lie back of the problem of crime.

In view of such facts Christianity must seek not only to save individual sinners but also to create a social consciousness in favor of recreating the race by the help of eugenic efforts. Salvation must apply to the improvement of the racial stock as well as to the reclamation of the lost individual.

Sociologists look upon sin as the failure of social living, as the selfish, unfriendly attitude toward others. Organized forms of sin that seek to make selfish profits out of human necessities, human weaknesses, and human depravity are particularly wicked because they not only affect the well-being of millions now living but also lay damaging hands upon multiplied millions yet unborn. The roots of sin are struck deep into the very flesh and blood and brain of humanity, and cure must come through the changing of human conditions that now make bad blood and diseased brains.

Economic injustice, organized plunder, commercialized amusements, studied evasion of law, and scientific rascality have become menacing armies making war on human welfare. With the growing world outlook and the increasing social sympathy the sins of organized, corporate manipulation are coming to be an increasing menace to society. Therefore, the economic sins are being looked upon as the more serious sins. They are the worst because they damage the most. He who robs one man in the dark is a hold-up and deserves the severity of the law; but he who robs by means of a corporation and is guilty of profiteering, beating down wage-earners, watering stocks, floating his business on the money of gullible people, and giving nothing in return, is a sinner guilty of the blackest economic villainy and deepest social thievery. Thus, to the modern Christian the problem of sin appears enormous, and the task of the church huge.

Man's moral cure.—How, then, does Christianity propose to treat sin? It faces it as a stern and stubborn reality and seeks its removal, not, however, without first diagnosing the essential nature of moral failure. How

[5] *Mental Hygiene*, April, 1918, pages 177–218.

does Jesus diagnose the disease of sin? While it presents many forms and various angles to him, they are all caused by the lack of moral harmony with God.

Nevertheless, he treats even the most positive rebellion against God as by no means hopeless. The secret of his optimistic outlook on life is discovered in the fact that, instead of despairing of men, he sees their well-nigh infinite possibilities even when they are living a life of sin and degradation.

The reason for Jesus' hope is founded neither on mere sentimental tenderness nor on shallow optimism; it is founded, rather, on the all-sufficient cure that is grounded in the very psychic nature of man. He found this cure on man's side centering in his will.

As illustrated by Jesus himself in the parable of the prodigal son this personal choice, while it is the first action of man looking toward the cure, is nevertheless clearly seen to be conditioned by at least two other factors: (1) a clear recognition of one's own sinful state and (2) a vision of a higher and better possible life. In other words, the will itself cannot come into action until there are sufficient motives to induce what often amounts not only to a radical but to a violent decision, such as was the case with the prodigal son. Yet without the definite act of the will—that is, without the actual "I will arise and go to my Father"—the cure of moral evil could never take place. Neither does this view overemphasize man's view of the transaction. As in the case of the prodigal, God is always ready with his forgiving and receiving love; but it is of no avail to the individual until he places himself in such a position that it is possible for him to appropriate this divine love. This is the reason why Jesus and his disciples constantly called to repentance, by which they always meant an actual change of purpose, a turning of their faces in a new direction.

Upon each new generation Christianity must advance with flaming vigor and fresh creative energy in order to make life over, to reenforce the system of good, and to inhibit the system of evil. Control of growing life by Christian nurture will improve both the inner and the outer conditions of man's self.

The growing interest in the Sunday-school movement, the widening scope of religious education, the fresh stimulus in the religious psychology of childhood and youth, and the welcome extension of religious education into vacation and week-day religious instruction are some of the modern ways in which the church answers God's call to redeem human nature.

Man and His Destiny

It is certain that we are here. Experience attests it. We came from somewhere. We are here for something. We are going somewhere. Christianity holds that we came from the heart and hand of God, that we are here to accomplish what good we can, and that we are striving toward a moral goal.

Man as he struggles with destiny.—Man is his own determiner of destiny. God has endowed him with the ability to make choices. The world he lives in continually presents alternatives between which he must choose, which choices lead to a destiny of blazing spiritual triumph or smashing moral defeat. In the making of his choices, however, man is influenced largely by his physical, mental, and social heritage, and by the environment in which he lives. But, conditioned as his conduct may be by such factors and circumstances, the final responsibility for his actions rests with himself. His destiny is bound up with the character he builds—whether it is noble or ignoble.

Man as he faces his duty.—Why is man here? He is set in nature. Imperfect he is and discontented. He starts with possibilities but must win character. He must realize his godlikeness by choice and struggle. He must find his way upward by the discipline of experience. Character is his when he wins it. It is his duty to become noble and good.

There is nothing so important as noble personality. There is nothing so fair as a fine life. There is nothing so solid as sound manhood. Man's duty here, then, is to forge, by the help of God, the best self that can be made out of the stuff of his inheritance. To achieve the best self and to help others achieve their best selves are man's primary business in the world.

The Christian ideal maps out the path to the goal of life. It presents the highest goal to be achieved. No other religion has set such a daring, dazzling goal for human adventure. The best is not easy to achieve, whether in art, science, or religion. There is of course an easy, accommodating, conventional standard of Christian conduct which anyone with decent intentions may achieve and live without much strain or effort; but to be a Christian in downright earnest and clean-cut conduct calls for heroic effort and steady application.

The world in which we now live is making it increasingly difficult for fine sainthood to make its way along twisted social paths and rocky business turns. Is it not a smothering fact that all the world is fast becoming one vast neighborhood? We are telescoped into congested city life. Factory, shop, and store huddle us in human mass. We eat, play, work, and travel *en masse*. We must learn how to live like Christian brothers together.

Man as he dreams of the future.—Whither is man bound? He is struggling upward through successive stages of perfecting self. This world is not man's only home. Christianity believes that man must learn how to live the more excellent life here in this world if he is to live it anywhere else. Eternal life may be endless in time; but to be thus it must certainly begin in time, for it is a quality of life more than a timeless quantity (John 17. 3).

The life beyond the grave undoubtedly is less conditioned than the one here. There the Christian confidently hopes to know as he is known, to learn what he cannot now understand, to realize in full what is now realized only in part; yet this present world is to be renewed, redeemed, reconstructed for humanity.

Heaven is man's spiritual home; but heaven is less a place than a power, more a character than a country. Heaven is where God is realized, his will done, and his love expressed in Christlike genuineness. God is there; and where God is, there are perfect happiness, beauty, and goodness, whether on earth or anywhere else.[6]

God's kingdom on earth and God's heaven above are

[6] For further detailed discussion on life beyond see Chapter XII.

made out of the same identical stuff—men and women redeemed from the power and enslavement of sin and set free in the moral conquering spirit of Christ. "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, *even* Jesus Christ" (John 17. 3).

Thought Questions

1. Whence did man come?
2. What is he here for?
3. Whither is he going?
4. What is the importance of human experience?
5. How may human experience be turned to good?
6. What important part does inheritance play in the making of man?
7. In what sense is man a free agent?
8. To what degree is man's character determined by the past?
9. What is the nature of man's destiny?

Suggested Readings

Christian Theology in Outline, Brown, Part IV.
The Manhood of the Master, Fosdick.
Religious Foundations, Jones, Chapter III.
The Mind and Its Education, Betts.

CHAPTER VIII

THE GROWING OF A CHRISTIAN

As has been shown in the preceding chapter, man is far from being what he ought to be. Moral defeat and spiritual lapses dog his steps. The history of the race furnishes countless evidences of the fact that man is more than the mere creature of his lower animal nature, that there are other elements in his make-up which are as truly natural to him as his physical being. These higher elements of his nature have lifted him again and again to heights undreamed and have made it possible for him to be classified as the child of God.

The Christian Life

The Christian mystery of making life over is no stranger than the unfailing power that keeps man going and growing in the new and living way.

It is a new life.—We move toward the higher life that is in Christ only as fast as we catch a vision of that life and make it our steady goal. Conversion marks the beginning of the higher life of the spirit, but only the beginning. That life must be continued, enriched, matured, and made perfect. The New Testament speaks often of "newness of life" (Rom. 6. 4), the spirit that "giveth life" (2 Cor. 3. 6), "the new man" (Eph. 2. 24). Obviously the Christian life is a new type of life, the eternal kind of life (John 3. 15), the life warmly responsive to goodness, truth, and spiritual values. The Christian life is understood to be a distinct quality of spiritual life. The Christian is aware that his real interests are spiritual and he defines life in spiritual terms. Christianity is the religion of the spiritual way of living. "I came that they may have life, and may have *it* abundantly" (John 10. 10).

It is God's life in man.—The real environment of the Christian is God. The new life marks a new relation of

the Christian to God. He has come to terms with himself by giving over his will, thought, and action to the guidance of the divine will. Man's life is open on all sides—conscious and subconscious—to the invasion of spiritual forces that come from God. Or, to change the figure, the divine life is resident in the soul of man and rises in the mind and will in response to the godlikeness in Christ. This life is now being organized around a new center—God in Christ.

It is the practice of the presence of God.—How did Jesus treat this new life in God? He did not leave men in the dark as to what that life really should mean. He devoted his entire earthly life and matchless teaching to make clear what this life is. God is the source of this new life, and God is love. Life for the Christian consists in having his being rooted and grounded in love, so that whatever he does he does in perfect good will (1 John 1. 5).

Where does man practice this presence of God? In himself and in his human world. The unrighteous, adulterous, murderous spirit, said Jesus, is the evil spirit, because it expresses the loveless self. Jesus does not point men to a book nor to a creed nor to a church. Jesus first points men to God and tells them to abide in God's love. The branch cannot bear fruit except it abide in the vine (John 15. 4). Then it bears much fruit. It is this life lived in God which all men need, must find, and must express. This is the abundant life. The preacher and teacher seek to impart it to their hearers. The Christian business man imparts it to his trade. All who have it translate it into the life of society. The soul that keeps company with Christ abides in God, and he who loves unfailingly practices the presence of God; for God is love. The fruit of such a life is Christlike conduct. And Christian conduct changes the world.

Beginning the Christian Life

The definite change from the lower to the higher control is commonly known as conversion. There is an inborn tendency of human nature to aspire to the highest possible achievement.

When we talk of our fellow men as lost or saved, there lies back of it the whole question of the evaluation of life's objects. A man is essentially lost, not by going somewhere, not by committing some deed, but by standing in a false relationship to the higher and genuine relationships of life. A child is lost in a crowd when his hand is loosed from his father's touch; one's arm is lost when it is pulled out of its socket; and one is morally lost when he is out of harmony with God and his ideal governing life.

It is evident that men sometimes lose their way. Failure of the highest is a smarting fact. Folk that go wrong long to get right. The divided self needs unifying. Conversion is the process of such spiritual unification.

The wooings of God.—God and man are in search of each other. The history of the higher religions pictures the Eternal One as in unwearied search of man that he might win him to the higher plane of living. Jesus and the cross furnish at once the best tangible and the most amazing evidence of God's tender care and passionate love for man. They portray the everlasting love that suffers for sin, and which was made manifest in him (1 John 3. 16). Nothing wins like love which suffers in order that others may live.

Without this inward fact of the cooperating Spirit of God in the mysterious process of drawing man to himself man probably would never try to reach up toward God. In other words, there would be no such thing as a Christian life. In the craze of modern psychology it is well to remember God's unfailing part in the process of conversion.

Realizing one's need.—In common with all possibility of human improvement along any line no renewing spiritual experience can take place unless there is first a realization of one's need of such a renewal.

Before one can desire anything better he must come to a keen recognition of the utter incompleteness and low plane of his present condition. A man needs to "come to himself." And it is all too evident that most men are filling themselves with the husks of life—power, glory, fame, riches, clothes, food, pleasures, mere knowledge, and

other like things to which the human heart clings—without ever realizing that they are merely existing, without having tasted the higher joy of a genuinely human life. Christianity brings one face to face with the full facts of the tragic failure of such a life.

The possible better self.—The realization of spiritual poverty in oneself becomes a disturbing fact only in the presence of an ideal that far outstrips one's present attainment. Somewhere Shelley has strikingly put it that his real self was faced by his "spectral self," and the "spectral self" said to his actual self: "Art thou satisfied? Art thou satisfied? Art thou satisfied?" There is the actual self, and there is a potential self that we would like to be.

Only as a man is able to project himself into a definite picture of what he might be will he strive to climb to the higher level of his possibility. Most lives are poor and cheap and shallow. What is needed is enrichment, fullness, freeness, and fineness of life. But men will not pay the cost to achieve the finer life until they have a concrete image of such a life. We are hero worshipers and need a perfect example before our very eyes, as a schoolchild needs a copy book. In Jesus Christ, Christianity finds that perfect ideal in an actual life, and as he is lifted up he will draw all men unto himself (John 12. 32).

The decision.—This drawing power of Jesus can have positive results only in so far as man's own will makes the decision Christward. The fact is that life is largely a matter of choices, a series of selections from objects and interests which crowd around it. As important as the will is, it is not an empty faculty that can create its own objects of choice. It is necessarily limited to matters and conditions that it finds at hand, or of which it at least must have some knowledge.

It is utter folly to expect a man to want to become a Christian when that man does not have the slightest idea of what it means to be a Christian. Perhaps the weakness of the church has often been occasioned by committing the serious mistake of overpersuading folks into a decision, the adequate meaning of which was never grasped.

The will is directed solely to a selection from known objects of that one which it finds, either for the moment or for a longer or shorter period, to be the most desirable. Now, what appears as most desirable depends on one's value judgments. Hence, any decision of the self depends on a stronger motive. This motive is the result of two factors: first, the realization of one's present condition, and, secondly, the anticipation of the goal to be reached.

Let us apply this to the religious decision involved in beginning the Christian life. As previously indicated, no man will decide to return to God who does not realize that he is away from him. The traveler in the "far country" must recognize his needy condition. But this is not enough: there must arise before his spiritual vision the hallowed and sacred picture of his own home, warmly beckoning the tired and sin-sick wanderer to return. Without this combination of factors there does not appear to be a sufficient motive for a decision. This is man's side of the transaction; the wooing of God's fadeless love is the divine element.

There must come to everyone the higher decisive moments of life, either by a series of choices or, as with Saint Paul, by a sudden crisis that sweeps all lesser values aside for the one greatest value.

It is not the method of making the choice which counts, but the object that is chosen, the values really involved. When Paul or the prodigal or anyone makes a decision to follow Christ, he is committing himself to the supreme personality in the world and, therefore, to the supreme moral and spiritual values which inhere in the Christ ideal of character and conduct. He is committed to the life of good will, downright righteousness, utmost loyalty, and the sacrificial struggle for others.

The actual turning.—Even the noblest decision is worthless if it does not result in the carrying out of the decision. Witness as an example of this the numberless New Year's resolutions, made only to be broken or never to be carried out at all. The "I will arise and go to my father" of the prodigal, to be of positive and practical value, must be followed by the further fact that "he arose and went to his father."

How many Christian decisions have been made in the past nineteen centuries, and how relatively few have been those who have dared to carry out these decisions in a long and fruitful life of Christian activity and service! The actual and positive turning from the life of the lower to the higher self, from a self-centered life to a Christ-centered life, must become an accomplished fact in one's constant conduct before one can truly be called a Christian.

The major part of the preceding discussion must be taken as applying only to those individuals who are "wanderers in the far country." Present-day religious education, religious psychology, and the experience of large numbers of Christians of all ages coincide in testifying to the fact that it is possible for a child so to grow up in Christian nurture as never to wander away from God. It ought to be self-evident that where there is no separation from God, there need be no turning about.

To insist upon a moral and religious reform where there exists no moral religious degeneracy has caused untold agony and uncalled-for distress to many earnest Christians whose religious life has been seriously questioned by ignorant though honest workers who insisted on dating conversions by the clock.

Conversion types.—These same earnest but ill-informed Christian workers have caused further distress to numberless seekers after God by insisting upon a stereotyped conversion experience and hard-and-fast rules by which that experience was to be brought about.

One of the best attested laws of life is that of the variety of individual experience and response. No two persons—or leaves, for that matter—are exactly alike. One of the glories of this universe lies in this fact of individual variation, which reveals the infinite capacity of our Creator. Nothing is more contrary to human nature or to God's intention, therefore, than to expect a uniformity of conversion experiences. When God comes to me he comes in a way that is fitting to my particular nature and needs. According to certain likenesses, however, it is both possible and convenient to make groupings of conversion types. Even in doing so care should be taken

not to make such grouping rigid nor to take any particular experience within a group as a necessary standard for that type.

A few of the more pronounced types deserve a brief consideration. There undoubtedly is a place for the more violent conversion, accompanied by much mental and spiritual suffering, which usually comes in the form of a sudden emotional upheaval; but such an experience is natural only in the case of a degraded or hardened sinner. Then, there are those who are morally upright but who have left God and his kingdom out of consideration. Under the stimulus of an intellectual upheaval they may find as sudden an experience as the previous class, or else they may slowly grow into a vital appreciation of religious values. Perhaps the bulk of conversions thus far have been characterized by a type of experience which followed a more or less prolonged conscious separation from God, but which, though instantaneous, were not marked either by wild emotion or much intellectual consideration. Here the turning consisted very largely in a quiet determination to change one's course of living and follow the better Master.

There is one other class which, by the ever more thorough and general application of modern religious-educational methods, is bound to increase rapidly in numbers, whose experiences should really be termed the normal Christian experience. There is now general agreement on the fact that every child born into this world is not only a creature but a child of God. It ought to be just as apparent that the most normal way of making such children lifelong Christians is not to be achieved by first letting them drift away from God, that they may be again brought back, but by keeping them from the very start as children of God and thus maintaining for them their divine birthright. There are, however, even in such lives distinct crises of religious experience, which, while in the nature of the case they cannot mark any turning about, are nevertheless distinct steps in advance. They are moments of distinct decision with reference to matters as they appear in the growing consciousness of adolescents.

Developing the Christian Life

Religion has its chief meaning in terms of character. The readiest measure of character is conduct. The fruits of the Christian life are its chief guaranty. "By their fruits ye shall know them" (Matt. 7. 16). Violent or mystical experiences, if obtained by high-pressure religious methods, are not trustworthy tests of genuine piety. Real conversion issues in radiant conduct. He is better who does better. He loves most who lives best. When Christ steps across the threshold of a life, not only does the soul's temperature rise into bracing convictions, but life's climate warms into ardent love, and conduct moves on steady feet. The newborn is the highborn.

The process of growth.—For such as are out of harmony with God conversion or a new spiritual start is necessary; yet it is possible to overemphasize this initial step to the extent that the experience which should be blessing untold turns out to be a curse (compare Luke 11. 24-26). That is, like all other beginnings, conversion is of value only in so far as it actually marks the start of a *new life*. Every good home rejoices over the arrival of a new world citizen, but that joy is quickly turned into suffering and sorrow if the new arrival fails to grow and develop and becomes an early victim of the Grim Reaper. A danger in Christianity has been to make so much of the beginning of the new Christian life as to neglect or leave entirely out of sight the necessary growth and development that must follow the new birth if the individual is ever to become a valuable citizen of the kingdom and a full-grown Christian. Like the infant the newborn Christian finds himself at first largely helpless and dependent on both God and those of his fellow believers who are stronger than he. Like that infant he has to be first fed with the pure milk of the gospel; but he is also expected at once to begin to grow, to develop his spiritual hearing and eyesight, to grow teeth that will enable him to take stronger and harder food, and to learn to stand and walk by his own strength and ability.

And this unfolding of his Christian life and character must be just as steady, constant, and uninterrupted as

is the physical development of man's body. Nothing is sadder than to see the development of a child held up or arrested by whatever cause. Such arrested development always results in a crippled life either physically or mentally. And while there are many physical cripples and mentally undeveloped people in our midst, I am afraid the proportion of Christians whose spiritual growth has been arrested, and whose spiritual life is therefore gradually declining and dying, is sadly larger.

Often there have been those in our midst who have held that, in addition to the experience of conversion, there is needed another experience, called the "second blessing," or "entire sanctification." Let it be remembered here that our God is both richer and better than to be satisfied with giving his children only two blessings. His blessings are innumerable, not one or two or three. It is true that there are recognizable in the religious unfolding of the individual certain more or less definite stages, but these are never to be considered as separate entities or acts of God in themselves. They are simply marked by certain natural religious crises, which are the inevitable results and culminations of a normal process of growth and development. Without such a constant and uninterrupted natural Christian unfolding and evolution sporadic methods of receiving divine blessings are likely to result in momentary emotional experiences and fail to have a lasting value or issue in active Christian life and endeavor. Throughout this whole process of the unfolding of the Christian life it is of course the grace of God, as operative in the individual believer, which makes the development possible and assures the constant and natural continuation of the process.

Means affecting growth.—As sunshine, proper and sufficient food, healthful surroundings, and good human contacts are essential aids in developing the child's physical and mental life, so there are certain means that not only are of assistance to spiritual development, but, if wholly neglected, will soon arrest and stop a normal religious growth. First in importance as well as in point of time is undoubtedly the matter of worship. Little Christian unfolding is possible where vital contact

with God is not constantly maintained. And it is certain that all true worship not only depends on but most essentially consists of just such vital and direct contact with God. Whether by worship we mean the private prayer life of the individual or its social expression in public worship, we are not really worshiping, either privately or publicly, unless this vital contact with God is a realized fact and certainty.

Another necessary means to Christian growth is to be found in Christian fellowship. When we know that many other believers have trodden the same paths over which we now must go, it appears nothing short of folly to try to walk without their constant guidance and advice. Nothing in the Christian life, I believe, is quite so costly as to separate oneself from one's fellow Christians. The sharing of one's experiences with like-minded believers is one of the most significant aids to the advancing Christian life.

The Bible still is and will always continue to be essentially a devotional book. No growing Christian and no one who cares to develop his Christian conduct and character can afford to neglect it. Both in its public reading and interpretation (through the pulpit) and perhaps more so in its private reading and meditation it is one of the main factors that will be found useful as a means of fostering growth. Other sane books on religion will also prove to be correspondingly helpful.

But there is probably no factor that will do more to enrich and ennoble and, therefore, to advance the life of the growing Christian than active participation in definitely Christian activities. Nothing so strengthens one's own purpose and confirms one's own convictions as constant self-expression. The moral, social, industrial, and spiritual needs of each church, neighborhood, city, country, nation, and of mankind itself are always so vast and numerous that no Christian of whatever kind or number of talents need bury any one of them. There is sufficient and worth-while opportunity for the active expression in Christian service of every and any talent any particular Christian may possess. Such active cooperation in building the kingdom of God builds one's own indi-

vidual personality more firmly and concretely into the whole structure of the Kingdom than any other factor, though, of course, the other factors mentioned need to be used to make one truly effective in this field of Christian action.

The life of perfection.—Every sincere disciple of Jesus hopes for a life of Christian perfection, and rightfully so. The Christian is entitled to inherit his birthright of coming to full-grown manhood in Jesus Christ. Yet perfection in this realm, as in any other, is always a process rather than an achievement. No physically full-grown man, no ever-so-wonderfully-developed athlete, has ever deceived himself into thinking that he has reached the peak of perfection, beyond which it was impossible for any man to go. Usually it is rather true that the more perfect a man actually is, either in physical caliber or in mental acumen, the more he realizes his own imperfections and shortcomings. The folk who claim to have reached the insurpassable heights of Christian perfection, who avow that it is no longer possible for them to do wrong, should, to say the least, bear close observance and inspection. The old apostle to the Gentiles was right when, near the close of his long, active, and marvelously fruitful career, he said: "Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect: but I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself yet to have laid hold: but one thing *I do*, forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, I press on toward the goal unto the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded." (Phil. 3. 12-15.)

Thought Questions

1. What makes the Christian life desirable?
2. How shall we think of God's part in beginning the Christian life?
3. What is meant by realizing one's religious need?
4. What is the possibility of a better self?

5. What is meant by making a decision to be a Christian?
6. What happens when one actually turns to follow Christ?
7. What are the leading conversion types?
8. What is meant by Christian growth?
9. What are the more common means affecting growth?
10. What are the stages of growth?

Suggested Readings

Religious Foundations, Jones, Chapters VIII, IX.
The Message of Jesus to Our Modern Life, Mathews, Chapter III.
What Can I Believe? Rall (pamphlet), Chapter VIII.

CHAPTER IX

THE BIBLE OF OUR FAITH

THE Bible is everyone's book. The Bible and the Christian faith are practically inseparable. Christian belief, for us to-day, is firmly rooted in biblical teaching. Religious ideas running counter to the New Testament have scant claim to be called Christian.

WHY WE BELIEVE IN THE BIBLE

However much Christians may differ from one another, they invariably make their appeal to the Bible in justification of their beliefs. In theory, at least, every creed derives its support from the Bible. Often this is done by a superficial use of the proof-text method. But all who are Christians believe in the Bible as in some sense the Word of God and appeal to its pages as the speech of God. Why do we Christians believe so firmly in the Bible?

The quality of its message.—It is reported that Coleridge, the great English writer, while reading in the Bible exclaimed: "In the Bible there is more that finds me than I have experienced in all other books put together. . . . The words of the Bible find me at greater depths of my being."[1] This is no uncommon experience.

The picture from the gallery of my childhood which I treasure most is a familiar scene in the life of my godly mother. Each evening after the day's work it was her custom to take down the big pictorial Bible from its lofty stand in the corner and, with tender hands opening its precious pages, to read reverently therefrom some message of assurance which seemed to transform her very face into a confident radiance and spiritual glow.

Sometimes when I would heedlessly burst noisily into the room, an instant hush would fall upon my young

[1] *The Realities of the Christian Religion*, Smith and Soares, page 20.

spirit; for the spot was hallowed by a Presence divine. God was in that place, and I knew it not. Mother often seemed to be talking to Someone to me invisible. Once, as I saw her lips moving, I ventured to ask her. "Mother, who are you talking to?" Slowly her head turned. She seemed to have come back from somewhere as she replied, "To *God,* my child." And from her tone and manner that word *"God"* seemed tremendous in its importance and bigness. I felt some invisible Power grip my young, ardent soul. I was impressed from afar.

My mother's experience is only typical of unnumbered millions who have found the messages of the Bible satisfying to the deepest needs of the soul. It is a fact that cannot be gainsaid. It is no less true of millions to-day. Do we not find the teachings of the Book instructive and inspiring for our own personal, daily living? Its vibrant messages are ringing challenges to good living, not to be found elsewhere in print. Its lofty messages satisfy us completely.

The source of its message.—A well-nigh universal conviction is that a divine element is present in the Bible. It shows the mind of God moving in its lofty thoughts and the heart of God throbbing in its flaming speech. Who can read reverently the sixth chapter of Isaiah, or the twenty-third psalm, or the Sermon on the Mount, or the thirteenth chapter of first Corinthians, and not feel the heart of God pressing close up against his own?

What is the secret of the vast power that the message of the Bible exerts over human life? The secret of its power, we believe, rests chiefly in the manifest presence of the divine element. Its own claims are that "men spake from God, being moved" (2 Pet. 1. 21); that "every scripture inspired of God *is* profitable" (2 Tim. 3. 16); that "God . . . hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his* Son" (Heb. 1. 1, 2). This is what the Bible thinks about itself. It witnesses to a divine element.

The presence of a divine element is evident throughout the Scriptures both in direct statement and frequent implication. The constant response that the human heart makes to the Bible message is widespread and amazing.

Again, the essential unity of thought and spirit run-

ning through all of its books, extending over many centuries and written by scores of authors, testifies to a single plan controlled by a single mind that guided all its workers in a gradual unfolding of a grand plan of redemption for sinful men. The Christian faith holds that God himself, by his Spirit, influenced the writers of the Bible, dwelt in their hearts and somehow inspired their utterances; not that he dictated its language to the authors, but that he moved upon their consciousness, in the richness of their experience, to say what they did. The words were their own.

The growing ideas and the lofty spirit that find expression on its pages, from first to last, find a spiritual level and strike a religious tone that no other human literature records. Throughout, the Bible bears ample witness to the presence of God. History is the chosen mode of his self-expression. "The events themselves are a part of God's self-revelation."[2]

The fruits of its message.—The practical test of the Bible is in its results. Everywhere that an intelligent and hearty acceptance of scriptural standards and ideas have been tried out, results have been essentially satisfactory.

Always and everywhere that the biblical standard has become controlling, whether in personal, social, or economic life, it has resulted in improvement of life; personal character has better met temptations and made finer use of opportunities for the good of others.

In the larger field of national life the principles of the Bible, as taught by Jesus, have put a new spirit into backward civilizations, have benefited peoples of the most divergent characters, and have been among the most powerful factors in the progress of the modern world, with its scientific light and brotherly humanity. To everyone who aspires it speaks. To all who seek after God it points the way. To those who are in quest of truth it unfolds the mind of God. There, if anywhere in books, we may be certain that God speaks. It makes good its claims. It works.

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[2] *The Nature of Scripture*, Peake, pages 9–12.

How We Got Our Bible

The history of the growth and development of the Bible is a long and checkered but fascinating story. Only the briefest outline can be set down in this small book.

How the Bible was written.—While "men spake from God, being moved" (2 Peter 1. 21), their speech was their own in form, arrangement, and style. Their human powers were in full play. The inspired writers were never used as dictographs. As we look at the Bible, it appears to be a collection of books rather than a single book; to have come by piecemeal, accumulating through some twelve centuries of time; and its religion seems to have been made by the life of the people of Israel as they moved along. Not only a large divine element but also an important human element appears to have been present in the making of the Bible. It witnesses to a lofty divine-human partnership, in which God is the inspiring Spirit and man the inspired workman.

Each book (or part of a book) in the Bible, as we now find it, was written for some urgent need that obtained at the time to warn, inspire, or edify people who were in the throes of some definite experience due to some trying condition, either social or political. It was with an immediate object in view that Baruch wrote down Jeremiah's sermons (Jer. 36. 4), that John and Luke wrote their Gospels (John 20. 30, 31; Luke 1. 1-4). Such books came to be valued in proportion to their fitness to meet and to minister to the specific situations then existing.

The permanent value of the Bible rests in the character of the truth that can apply to similar situations in any time and among any people wherever the Book is known and used. Thus, anything has value that fills a real need, and its value is greatest when the need that it meets is of a high moral and spiritual order.

How the books were selected.—Collections of such manuscripts, which had proved highly useful, inspiring, and bracing to life and conduct, were made from time to time for religious and moral guidance by earnest men in both Judaism and Christianity. Hence, we have the Old and New Testaments in answer to prolonged reli-

gious needs. The useful is valued and preserved. At various times standard collections of books were decided upon by the religious body, or the church, through its leaders. This selection of books, already made sacred by usage, is known as the canon of the Scriptures. The word "canon" refers to certain books decided upon as sacred and thereafter looked upon as authoritative and binding as contrasted with other books not held so sacred.

In the Old Testament there were three stages of such canonization of books: (1) the law of Moses, comprising the five first books of the Old Testament; (2) the prophets, made up of the "former and the latter" prophets' writings (the former including the early historical books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings, and the latter including the so-called major and minor prophets); (3) the writings, which began to be collected about 200 B. C. and which did not receive full scriptural recognition until after the time of Jesus. This collection is made up of the remainder of the Old Testament books.

The New Testament has passed through a similar process of selection, but in much less time than the Old Testament. The history of this selection shows that some books were now in, now out of the canon, for it was difficult in some instances to determine their real value. Even as late as in the time of Luther it was declared that the Epistle of James was "a straw epistle" that ought to be thrown out.

In view of this fact we cannot hold that all the books in the Bible are of equal value and worth. Leviticus, for instance, is not to be treated as of equal value with the Gospel of John in moral guidance and spiritual inspiration for us to-day.

Consequently, the Bible must be used with discrimination as to its fitness to meet our present needs. The parts that meet our needs best we value most highly. The Jew valued the law more than he did the prophets; we reverse that estimate to-day, since the social appeal of the prophets better fits our present needs for the social reconstruction of society.

In what sense, then, are the books of the Bible the inspired Word of God? In the sense that they inspire; and

the parts that inspire us most to-day are for us most highly inspired and most nearly reveal the mind of God. This test places the highest value upon the Psalms and the sermons of the great prophets in the Old Testament, and upon the words of Jesus recorded in the New Testament.

Is the Bible, then, man-made or God-made? It is both. God furnished human nature with the craving for religion; and God moved upon man's powers to aspire after the best; but man was left free to select his own words and express in his own way the rich things his soul felt at the touch of the invisible Spirit. Hence, the Bible may be regarded as the product of a divine-human partnership.

How its teachings developed.—The Bible is not a static book, let down, already miraculously made and complete, from heaven. It is, rather, a progressive revelation of God, hammered out on the anvil of human experience. The growth of religion, like the growth of other things, has been a long, slow process.

The Bible is a great religious history, a vast record, of mankind's most stimulating teachers who have found spiritual satisfaction in divine guidance and holy inspiration. Each generation of men has sought to interpret the problems of the world in which it lived in terms of God.

The forms that the growing religion of the Bible took at any particular time were largely shaped by the uppermost interest of that age. Hence, its teachings have developed as man has developed. As man's experience of life enlarged, his understanding of God took on bigger and better meaning.

Beyond the earliest crudely human conception of God (as pictured in such a phrase as "Jehovah God walking in the garden in the cool of the day" [Gen. 3. 8]) Moses progressed in that he thought of him as a Lawmaker and Provider (Exod. 20; 3. 2ff.; 16. 4ff.). This was followed by the God of the judges, who was a God of battles (Judg. 1. 4). The God of the prophets came to be a God of social justice (Amos 2. 6). But the peak was reached by Jesus, whose God is the merciful, loving Father of men (Matt. 6. 1-8). Thus, it becomes very apparent that there is an essential development in the God idea in the

Bible from the crudest human notions to the most highly spiritualized conception, such as the one found in the teachings of Jesus.

The world has been changing continually from age to age. That was as true of the ancient world of the Bible as of our own. The vast experiences of life in meeting its growing problems have ever caused men to change their estimates and interpretations of life. This happened to Israel also. The people of God passed through successive interpretations of world movements, of social orders, of political experiences, and of moral estimates that differ from each other and show several marked stages of a growing ideal in the Old Testament.

Thus, the will of God, we believe, worked itself out with patience in the long history of Israel. More than a thousand years of struggling experience of the Hebrew people were necessary to prepare the way for the coming of Christianity. It takes man discouragingly long to catch up with the lofty ideals of God. That process is made traceable for us in the Scriptures.

The growing nature of the Bible is seen by a comparison of the religion of Moses, the religion of the prophets, and the religion of late Judaism. Due to the early religious God concept, in which he is pictured as more or less local, manlike, severe, and even arbitrary (Gen. 28. 17), morality consisted largely in certain acts thought necessary to please God; punishment was harsh and even cruel (1 Sam. 15. 33); rewards consisted mostly in temporal blessings, good crops, long life, and big families (Deut. 5. 16).

The prophetic religion, beginning with Amos about 760 B. C., marks a notable advance in the religion and ethics of Israel. God is clothed with a high moral character, becomes the God of the whole earth, and is the righteous, spiritual, Holy One of Israel; sin is sharply defined as social misconduct; and inward baseness, punishments, and rewards become personal, social, and graded in character.

The religion of late Judaism took a legalistic slump. God is the great Lawgiver and Judge; petty rules cover all conduct; certain ecclesiastical, nonmoral sins stand out

above real moral shortcomings. The grand and lofty religion of the prophets, though not entirely lost sight of, was squeezed into the narrow, dogmatic case of literalism and formalism. This was the religion of Jesus' day—a religion he tried to correct and cure at the hazard of his life. But he gave to the world a new and better religion than it had ever had—the religion of the spirit.

Thus, one may trace any idea through the Bible and find marks of change and growth in its content and application to life. This does not mean, however, that the old ideas were wrong; it means that they were incomplete, on their way to fullness. A green apple is not wrong because it is not ripe or full-grown. It takes time and many stages to grow either an apple or an idea, but God is back of both with his sunshine and love.

How We Use the Bible

No matter how the Bible came to be nor how valuable it is, unless we use it, and use it well, it will become to us to-day a neglected book. Our practical approach to the Bible is of immense importance.

Modern criticism of the Bible.—No one to-day can study the literature of biblical interpretation without being aware of the fact that the Bible has been subjected to the most rigid test of criticism—higher and lower, searching and scholarly. What effect has this modern criticism had upon our Bible? It has proved both a gain and a loss—a gain in correcting verbal and documental errors, a loss in that in some instances too great stress has been laid upon dates, authorships, and imperfections of the Bible.

What is meant by the modern criticism of the Bible? First of all, modern criticism is a careful, constructive study of the Bible with a view to getting at the exact facts. In the second place, modern criticism has reconstructed parts of documents and doctrines about the Book, has set forth its essential unity of moral and spiritual development, and has assigned different values to different levels of revelation found therein.

Such scholarly criticism, it is claimed by its friends, has resulted in much good to the Christian faith in the

sloughing off of many false notions about the Book and the correcting of mistaken traditions about authors of books, dates of the appearance of books, manner of their composition, and the character of their contents and value.

Thus, the theory of inspiration is modified and improved; not, as some think, destroyed. The Bible is looked upon as an historic record of divine-human revelation. Its permanent worth is looked for in those passages which common Christian experience has verified most in the actual testing places of life. And the teachings of Scripture are determined by the nature of Scripture itself and the witness of truth rather than by ancient inherited theories held in advance concerning them.

Consequently, whatever scholarly criticism has done or may do, the solid parts of the Bible remain as changeless portions of a lofty religious literature, coming from the Spirit of God by way of the mind and heart of man. The Bible is not less but, rather, more valuable when regarded as a gradual, continuous, and living historical revelation of God in terms of human experience.

What the lover of the Bible really wants to know is whether its abiding worth has been disturbed by criticism. Can he still depend on its great messages as revealing the truth of life? Can the modern man go to it for guidance, comfort, and inspiration, as did men of old? Not in the same way, but still with equal soul-satisfaction.

It is often asked, "What is there left of the Bible when the critics get through with it?" What was good is good; what did express God's mind does express it; what God promised he promises; what he inspired inspires. All that was ever true remains true. Nothing of permanent worth has been disturbed. The blessed Book remains the Book of life that it has ever been in the past. And no honest critic would deny these facts. Hence, the Bible does not need our defense. It is able to take care of itself. Its own deep worth defends it. Nothing that men can say about it is going to destroy it, any more than criticism of the sun will blot out its light and warmth.

The abuse of the Bible.—No other book in the world

has been so much used and at the same time so flagrantly abused as the Bible. It has been made to sanction many historic evils as well as much good. Slavery, burning of witches and heretics, gambling, war, intemperance, and other unspeakable evils of the race have been supported by citations from the Bible. For whatever large groups of Christians have been deeply interested in maintaining for any length of time biblical warrant has been sought, found, and applied. Often this has been done at the expense of plain, natural, intended meanings of the texts quoted.

Another common abusive use of the Bible is that of treating it as authoritative in all fields of human knowledge, whereas its one supreme field of authority is that of morals and religion. In the field of human ideals and conduct it is unsurpassed. Because of this oversight earnest Bible devotees have noisily opposed most new scientific discoveries as unbiblical and untrue. The rotation of the earth, the law of gravitation, the law of evolution, and many other scientific truths now accepted have been opposed by appeals to the Bible. Such mistaken conceptions have constantly arisen through the flagrant use of the proof-text method.

The use of the Bible.—A soberer and a saner use of the Bible is aided by several common sense considerations: (1) a desire to grasp the author's *meaning* as he intended it at its writing, whether we like it or not; (2) a more modest claim for the Bible by limiting its field of authority to a useful knowledge of God and his will for human salvation; (3) a frank recognition of the growth of the Bible as a vast collection of sacred literature of many volumes, arising at different times in the long schooling of Israel by the living God; and (4) an application of the Bible truths, not literally nor fancifully nor prejudicially, but in the lofty spirit that characterizes its best persons.

Thus treated, the prophets and Jesus will be likely to speak to us of to-day most often and most helpfully. Such honest use of the Bible will soon do away with a vicious, literal, proof-texting, dead-level abuse of God's great Book. Let us cease using it in a narrow and heated

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partisan spirit to support our own prejudiced doctrines and notions.

We must never allow anything in the Bible which contradicts its own best self-expression to influence our better moral and religious judgments. No meaning extracted from its pages which sinks below the level of Jesus' teaching can for long obtain Christian sanction. The Bible will serve its greatest good when men seek its most obvious meaning. The Bible should be sought for the faultless light that it sheds on our human needs, for divine guidance and help, rather than for proof texts to support worn-out dogmas. The God of abiding presence speaks in perpetual freshness from its words of truth and power. Thus, by means of its light, men find God in Christlikeness of life.

The way really to appreciate the Bible is to get close to it and to study it. We shall never learn much about the Bible from listening to other folks talking about it. We must try to understand it by opening its lids, and, with the best aids, getting hold of its great teachings, rather than being contented with second-hand information about it. There is altogether too much absent treatment of the great Book, ending in superstitious reverence instead of getting it close to one's eyes and near to one's heart and into one's very life.

Thought Questions

1. How do we determine that the Bible is the Word of God?
2. What is the nature of religious certainty found in the Bible?
3. How do we test the accuracy of the Bible?
4. Has modern criticism destroyed anything in the Bible?
5. How do you explain that the Bible is both a human and a divine book?
6. How may we use the Bible so as to get the most good out of it?
7. What use do you make of the Bible personally?
8. What is the value of teaching the Bible to children in the Sunday school?

Suggested Readings

Why I Believe in Religion, Brown, Chapter V.
The Bible, Barclay.
The Story of Our Bible, Hunting.
How We Got Our Bible, Smythe.
Common-Sense Religion, Wilson, Chapter II.
What Jesus Taught, Slaten, Chapter II.

CHAPTER X

THE CHURCH OF OUR FELLOWSHIP

The Christian Church is neither a building housing worshipers nor a congregation of listeners at a preaching service; the church is rather the organized body of Christian believers, endeavoring to express in thought, deed, and worship the spirit and ideal of Jesus Christ. Worshipers come and go, churches rise and decay; but the Christ spirit and ideal are carried on in some form or other by means of the organized institution we call the church. The love of Christ constraining us (2 Cor. 5. 14) is the bond of church fellowship the world over in every tongue.

The Church of the Past

Like her living Lord the church is of the past, present, and future. Her roots run back to the rich and fruitful soil of Jesus' life and work; in the present she spreads her fruit-laden branches over well-nigh every known part of our globe; her future is bright with the glowing promises of an ever more abundant harvest of redeemed life.

The origin of the church.—Jesus is the Founder of the Christian Church, not in the sense that he formed any definite church organization, but in the sense that his personality became the central figure and dominant spirit to which his disciples were irresistibly attracted. It was the common cause, purpose, and spirit that naturally bound them together into a fellowship. This fellowship, centering around Jesus, was the real beginning of the Christian Church. Hence, the genius of the church in all ages has expressed itself in a spiritual brotherhood. Fellowship, and not systematic organization, is the essential element of the Christian Church. This also accounts for the common expressions by which the true church and mere church organizations have for ages been distinguished—namely, the universal church of believers and the church as an organized institution.

While in spirit and idea the church existed before Pentecost, in the common allegiance of the disciples to Jesus, it was this vital spiritual experience which united old and new believers in a common fellowship, which made a more formal organization become an early fact. Thus, the day of Pentecost has often been called the birthday of the Christian Church.

The development of the church.—After the day of Pentecost the development of the church consisted very largely in the spreading of the gospel from place to place in the Roman Empire. At first, in each place the followers banded themselves together in more or less loosely connected organizations. As the movement grew, it became desirable not only to establish and maintain vital contacts between the separate organizations but to have a commonly recognized and established leadership.

The apostles and all those who had most nearly shared the earthly life of our Master became the natural leaders of this general movement.

As Christianity was compelled to face Greek philosophy and Roman law, further adjustment became imperative. The only way that such adjustment could be made, without breaking up the movement into hundreds of separate and ever more divided religious camps, was to tie them together into a closely formed and, at times, perhaps autocratically governed organization. It is really through such material causes as these and the very evident desire to meet these conditions in the best possible manner that the autocratic form of church government known as the Roman Catholic Church came into existence.

The Protestant Reformation under Luther and others was a protest chiefly against doctrinal errors and administrative abuses. It prepared the way for a more democratic form of organization. This democratic temper has since become more and more effective in church government; but with it has come the unfortunate division that, if long continued, is certain to weaken the effectiveness of the church.

The danger of laying more and more stress upon the institutional side of the church, regarding the church as an end instead of a means, as an organization instead of a

fellowship, has become more painfully apparent as the centuries have gone by. Unless this danger is met squarely, the church will of necessity lose even the right to call itself Christian; for "Christian" means Christlike, and Christlikeness is an attitude, a spirit, rather than an institution. This in no sense disparages the institution; it attempts only to lay the emphasis where it belongs and where Jesus put it—upon the spiritual fellowship. Hence, the church is fond of singing:

Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

The Church of the Present

The church is the treasure house of vast and valuable spiritual traditions in the form of lofty ideals, moral values, and inspirational dynamics; yet multitudes to-day seriously question the necessity and even the usefulness of the church. In view of this fact it will be worth our while to examine the present-day church to find out what she has to offer this age and generation.

The message of the church.—The new day is here, although we are still in the old world of nature and of material life. But such words as "society," "industry," "politics," "justice," "war," "sacrifice," "church," "sin," and "salvation" are being invested with new meanings.

Has the church a new message—has it any real message—for the new day? How shall the church be the messenger of Christ in the world of to-day?

First, the church to-day must speak and write to the real present world situation. The church is accused by some of side-stepping acute economic issues to avoid offending some in the pew; or of speaking with a vague and ever outworn emphasis. Such charges, if true, are serious.

Secondly, the church is called upon to speak with the *right* emphasis. The call to a higher spiritual way of living is always in order. The message of the pulpit must always carry the inspirational element. Men always need more faith, better conscience, cleaner motives, and a closer

view of Jesus Christ. That is the principal business of the church.

But it is the duty of the church to do more than to stir men's consciences: it must interpret life as a whole in the light of Jesus; it must furnish and further a community program that sets the ideal and gives the service motive to every good thing that is undertaken.

Thirdly, the message of the church must be more definite and be made to apply to specific evils or to good causes where there are conflicting interests involved. This calls for faith and courage and clear thinking.

Take, for example, the fierce industrial struggle. Good men in the same church are lined up on both sides of the present intense industrial warfare. What shall the church do? In its attitude toward this or any other problem it can (1) avoid the issue and keep on neutral ground, or (2) it can take sides and become partisan, or (3) it can apply the Christ principles and, irrespective of sides, condemn the unchristian practices and commend the Christlike practices wherever they chance to be found.

The task of the church.—The Christian Church is the chief agency for the setting up of the kingdom of God in the world. Hence, the church has a single task but many activities. Its business is to teach the growing child, quicken the sense of social justice, plead the cause of the helpless, protect the rights of the weak, rebuke the grasping, find the lost, restore the erring, care for the spiritually sick, build and conserve the finest type of Christian character in its fellowship, stimulate the world with a high idealism in all of its social processes. In a word, the task of the church is the purpose of Jesus—that of establishing the new divine social order among men, founded on good will and governed in righteousness.

But in each new age the Christian Church comes face to face with new religious problems. They become pressing, practical problems of living concern to everyone. For example, what shall be the present approach to men of earnest inquiry—men who are bewildered by the fresh interpretative inundation that is sweeping over all human institutions in the swelling flood of freshly discovered truth? What shall the Christian leaders say to perplexed

persons who are alarmed about the lack of appeal in customary religious forms, the decline of the older form of evangelism, the modern decay of the old sense of sin, the growing disinterest in the old view of miracles and prediction, and the obvious impatience with ecclesiastical morality?

The answer must be a fresh, heroic, intelligent, united plea for the reconstruction of society into a genuinely Christian civilization. To accomplish this end it is necessary to understand both the temper of the time in which we live and the essential truths that the Christian Church holds, and then to teach those truths in order to make possible their practice in everyday life, and thus to apply honestly the Christian principles to world conditions. Such, in brief, is the gigantic task before the church.

How to secure righteousness in economic relations, how to make a warless world, how to solve the amusement question, and how to save the home life of our age are among the gravest problems before us. The task of the church is to create the moral conscience that will seize and intelligently grapple with these problems.

The faults of the church.—Since the purpose of the church is to spiritualize civilization; since the church has the ideal, the power, and the organization to spiritualize this civilization, why has it not done so? This question is often asked about the church and goes to the heart of the charge that the usefulness of the church has been outgrown. There are at least four principal reasons to be found chiefly in the church itself, the organized agent of Christianity in the world.

There is, first and foremost, the blind zeal of sectarian rivalry; secondly, the exclusiveness of the local church; thirdly, a reflex of modern capitalism in the pew; and, fourthly, the lack of a telling, modern message to stir and control men's consciences in the midst of a straining and complex civilization.

"For thirty years," says Briggs, "our churches have been running away from the people in a competitive scamper."[1] "Now, there are two things," says William H. Leach, "which the church dearly loves which stand

[1] *Journal of Religion*, November, 1922, pages 621–22.

between it and the abandoning of its great heresy. These are parochialism and denominationalism. These two still reign supreme among Protestant people. Churchmen love their particular parish above their denomination and their denomination above the church. And, as a rule, they love the church more than needy humanity."[2] "Money," continues Mr. Leach, "has a strange habit of becoming pious and reactionary when once devoted to religious work."[3]

Frank Crane, in an article in the *Century Magazine,* gives as one of the chief immoralities of the church to-day "its exclusiveness."[4] James J. Coale, in the *Yale Review* of October, 1921, insists that "the Protestant Church has no message for the masses."

It is not that the church lacks either the material for such a message or the spirit with which to kindle it. It has the incomparable Christ and his superb idealism, but it has fallen short in that it has failed to present a challenging message to men in modern life. Because so much of the church's energy has been misdirected in efforts to glorify the institution, it is failing to throw itself wholeheartedly and unitedly into struggles in behalf of great human causes. The church has not been able to keep apace, either in modern methods of its work or in the making of up-to-date concepts of its belief, with the rapid progress of modern civilization.

Forces are at work seeking to remedy these defects. The religious-education movement, with its new and better methods of building Christ into this generation, is being tried and tested. Thus, results of science, education, and psychology are made to serve Christianity in a new way and with added effectiveness.

While we all deplore the faults of the church, they are not inherent necessities. The faults may be cured when the church desires to get rid of them, and she must shake off these faults or lose her effectiveness for good.

Those who stand aloof and sharply criticize the church for her faults would do well to remember her stupendous task in trying to idealize life, the solid blackness of an evil

[2] *Journal of Religion*, November, 1921, pages 621–22.
[3] *Ibid.* [4] *Ibid.*

world in which she works, and the strain on her assimilative powers in trying to convert raw human nature of ordinary men and women into noble saints.

Are there things about the church which we do not like? They can be cured. Do her beliefs appear to be crude and outworn at many points? These beliefs are being restated and carefully brought up to date. Are her standards of conduct in social obligation deficient? Appeal to the social messages of the prophets and Jesus in the light of present needs will remedy that. Has Protestantism overemphasized the personal fellowship with God to the neglect of group values? The ever-growing emphasis on the so-called social gospel proves that this is no longer the case. Has a shameful denominational selfishness eaten into the life of the church? Interdenominational cooperation in larger community enterprises of the kingdom will do much to cure the disease. The challenge of urgent human needs should cure her sectarian selfishness. Is the church living too much for itself and its own institutional success? Federated efforts in humanity-wide problems, such as the creation of a rumless and warless world, will help the church to forget its own statistics, as it did for a brief moment in the Great War. The church's efforts must be organized around broad, human interests that condition man's safety and happiness. It is the overemphasis on details of Christian belief that are of mere secondary importance which makes for the accentuation of denominational differences. But if greater stress were laid on those matters which Jesus considered fundamental in Christian living, and in which all Christendom believes, denominational differences would be broken down.

Loyalty to the church.—Many who believe in the spirit of Jesus have forsaken the institution that organically seeks to express it. Many others silently neglect it. We have seen that the church has faults, but her virtues are more and greater. A Christian to-day is under great obligation to the church.

The fellowship the church affords has been to most of us a genuine help. Her ideals have transformed our own purposes. Without constant contact with the Christian

Church the individual is not likely to live his life on the upper levels of conduct in a material world that concerns itself mainly with animal comforts.

The church, with all of its faults, is the outstanding institutional effort to purify the social life, to change the economic motive from profit to service, to lift the individual's sagging standard to the lofty ideal of Jesus, and to create everywhere the brotherly feeling.

The church is the one institution among men which is big and brave and strong enough to stand up and accept the glorious privilege of trying to make this needy world over into the sky-lifting perfection of the kingdom of God. And the church, in the face of hard, sordid, damaging facts, actually believes that it can be made over.

Is it not possible for one to be a Christian without belonging to the church? One might answer by asking if there would long be any Christians in the world if the church were entirely removed from society. Few things to-day can long endure without being championed by organized effort. Christians are the fruit of Christian institutions—the Christian family, the Christian school, and the Christian Church. Remove the Christian Church, and the Christian home and school are likely to disappear.

No man with red blood and a burning heart for the uplift of mankind can afford to remain outside of and indifferent to an institution that is doing business on so broad a scale.

The Future of the Church

"The true blessedness of man is not to arrive but to travel," said Stevenson.[5] To judge from the past and its stock in trade, Christianity will remain a permanent force in human life and society; but it is certain to be very greatly modified in many respects. In this modern world the one thing that is fixed and permanent is change. Therefore, nothing in the future will remain just as it is or has been in the past.

A new method.—Perhaps nothing will mark the church of to-morrow more than the dominance and practice of a new method in all of her activities. A careful study of

[5] *American Magazine*, August, 1923, page 14.

human nature has shown us that the development of consciousness may be controlled in its unfolding, whether in an individual or in a group. The modern educational method, which has practically revolutionized human activity in almost all its branches, is nothing but the application of this principle. Our day stands definitely committed to a process of advance by the employment of the educational method. We are now convinced that the forms of civilization are modifiable by educational direction and control.

The value of this method has already been partially recognized by the Protestant Church in the organization and conduct of the Sunday-school movement. The Roman Catholic Church has long been doing pioneer work in this line and has been visibly rewarded in the results achieved. Protestantism, in the new movement of religious education, is beginning to face the seriousness of her past negligence and is throwing herself into an application of the educational method which argues well for the future.

It is evident that what the coming days need more than anything else is intelligent Christians; neither a Christian experience nor the possession of knowledge will avail if they are separated. The world needs the combination; and it is also evident that this combination can be had only if the church will not merely be a leader in morals and religion but actually become a teacher, conducting schools of religion in which the coming generations may be trained as carefully in righteousness and religion as the present generation has been taught the arts of reading, history, and arithmetic.

The apparent drift of the church.—The direction in which the church is moving is gradually changing, and its future can be fairly predicted in a general way. There are certain to be (1) less disputing about theological differences and more emphasis upon agreements; (2) less reliance upon superstition and special providences and more upon orderly divine processes in seeking God's help and favor; (3) less interest in speculative theology and more in simpler statements of creeds, less reliance upon secondhand sources for information and more dependence

on the original New Testament sources and practical experience for the facts and interpretations of Christianity; (4) a marked lessening in mere sectarian zeal for "my church" and a greater concern of the churches to cooperate in the effort of Christianizing the social order; and (5) a serious application of the educational method to religion.

Christianity in the new age, consequently, will be clearer, simpler, more natural, more attractive, more active and useful, than any form in the past has been. Finally, fundamental faith in a Christlike God and an effort to live that faith in a helpful life of love to all men will be more and more the rule of Christians.

An old Buddhist poem expresses the larger unity of faiths:

> **From the foot of the mountain many**
> **Are the paths ascending in shadow,**
> **But from the cloudless summit all**
> **Who climb behold the self-same moon.**[6]

Thought Questions

1. Where and how did the Christian Church originate?
2. Trace briefly the development of the church.
3. Has the church a clear-cut message for the needs of to-day?
4. What are the outstanding faults of the church?
5. How can these faults be cured?
6. How can we best show our loyalty to the church?
7. What is the outlook for the future of the church?
8. What is likely to mark the Christianity of the near future?
9. Is the church a greater or less power for good in the world than it used to be?

Suggested Readings

What Must the Church Do to Be Saved? Tittle, Chapters I, VI.

The New Program of Religious Education, Betts, Chapters VI, VII.

Common-Sense Religion, Wilson, Chapter I.

[6] Article by Bruce Barton in *Collier's*, March 24, 1923, page 10.

CHAPTER XI

THE IDEAL OF THE KINGDOM

The passionate purpose of Jesus was to establish an ideal order among men, a Christian society, a new divine social order in human life—the kingdom of God.[1]

The Kingdom Ideal in the Teaching of Jesus

The theme of the kingdom of God, or the new divine social order among men, was at the center of Jesus' teaching. It was oftenest upon his lips. It is the message of his opening ministry (Matt. 4. 17), the theme of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 to 7), and the favorite subject of the parables (Matt. 13; Luke 18). No fewer than 112 times are references made to the kingdom of God in the Gospels. Its establishment was Jesus' greatest concern. What, then, did Jesus teach about the Kingdom?

The place of the Kingdom.—It is to be located upon the earth, but not of the earth. It was something germinally present in this world in Jesus' day—"among you" and "within you."

The Kingdom, Jesus taught, was not only present; it was precious, hidden, and powerful (Matt. 13). Because the kingdom of Jesus was something so very different in quality from the material and political kingdoms that men of Jesus' day were expecting, it was possible to miss it altogether. It is to be a spiritual order ruled by love and measured by the higher righteousness. Hence, Jesus urges the seeking of it above every other thing in life (Matt. 6. 33).

In a word, Jesus tried to say in many and striking ways that the kingdom of God was a spiritual reality, a kingdom of the soul, a rule of God in the individual life, and

[1] The word "social" is generally used to imply human relationships, especially in organized groups, such as the family, school, church, industrial order, and state. It is not intended to suggest any theory of socialism.

a community of brothers living together in the spirit of love and righteousness. The kingdom of God is a present fact, then, only as the spirit of faith, love, and righteousness rules in personal and social life.

The aim of the Kingdom.—Its primary aim is to establish the will of God on this earth (Matt. 6. 10) as it is now being done in heaven and to create among men a new divine social order wherein dwelleth righteousness. To realize this aim a new brotherhood of believers was formed by Jesus, beginning with the Twelve, which later expanded into the apostolic church and, ultimately, into the Christian Church at large.

The Kingdom, in its social aspect, is to consist in a new way of living together in brotherly friendliness inspired by the spirit of Jesus, which is the spirit of good will, downright justice, sacrificial service.

The conditions of entrance to the Kingdom.—There are certain entrance conditions to the Kingdom which Jesus insists upon. These conditions are inward desires and attitudes of a teachable spirit, of good will to all, a hunger for spiritual values, a trustfulness toward God, a purity of heart, uprightness of motive, and a desire to be useful and helpful to others (Matt. 5. 1-19). They who are simple, open, and trustful, like a child, shall enter the kingdom of God. Such are the conditions that are to usher in the new divine social order among men.

The Kingdom Ideal Operative in the Public Good

It is evident that Jesus meant for the Kingdom ideal to be operative in all phases of human life, from the most intimate family life to the most distant international relationships.

Public utilities.—The Kingdom ideal is a service ideal and can be realized in every phase of public life. The numerous public utilities—railroad, street cars, telephones, telegraph systems, etc.—and the natural resources of our country—gas, electricity, water, coal, oil, forests, etc.—are common necessities now largely in the hands of individual corporations, which operate them primarily for their own personal gains. The church must do all in its

power to shift the emphasis here from the profit to the service motive.

For example, coal experts tell us that in the mad desire for profit coal barons are taking only superior coal, which yields the big profits, and leaving the inferior coal, which, after a generation or so, will have to be mined at a distinct loss and at public expense. Coal must be mined for the purpose of keeping people warm rather than for the purpose of filling the coffers of selfish capitalists.

Our forests, minerals, and other natural resources must likewise be conserved—rather than exploited—in order that the generations to come may not stand in need of necessities and comforts, for the finest altruism is that which projects itself into the future. Into the operation of all public utilities and into the development of our natural resources, whether they are privately or publicly owned, the church must seek to inject the idea that the primary purpose involved is that of serving the highest human good. The church must recognize the necessity for close supervision by public authorities of all service corporations, that this service ideal shall not be swallowed up in what appear to be legitimate private interests.

Public health.—Public health is a common good and must have special and expert consideration. Protection against contagious and occupational diseases is a public necessity. It is the duty of the church to throw its influence on the side that guarantees the largest degree of healthfulness in the community and to oppose strenuously such unsocial acts as food adulteration, unhealthful factory and housing conditions, traffic in drugs and alcoholics, and the spread of contagious diseases. Failure to do so is neglecting to consider Jesus' care for men's bodies. He was the good Physician, who healed many.

The Kingdom ideal has already vastly broadened human sympathy and has stimulated a generous concern for the physical well-being of others, so that not only the church but the state is making public health one of its major duties. Free dispensaries, city hospitals, free clinics, and receiving hospitals are built, equipped, and staffed to insure public health. The church has done much and

can do more to stimulate the good-Samaritan spirit on the part of the state and industrial concerns.

Public charges.—In every community is found the driftwood of human life. Natural defects, diseased conditions, unsocial attitudes, criminal tendencies, and perverted interests are among the factors that drive men and women into the ranks of the dependent and the criminal. These, not less than others, are our human brothers and sisters and have a real, though painful, claim upon us. We must of course devise means of treating them. As yet much of our public dealing with them has been pagan rather than Christian in principle and method.

The Kingdom ideal holds all men to be brothers and children of God the Father and works upon the principle of good will rather than punishment in dealing with criminals.

We are coming to see that criminality is largely a matter of personal or social disease and therefore needs cure, not cruelty; remedy, not roughness of treatment. The Christian ideal is that of remedial, not punitive, correction.

Hence, we are making experiments in probation, in indeterminate sentences, in Big Brother movements, teaching trades, thrift, and character inside of prison walls. As for the pauper and dependent classes we need to help them to help themselves and avoid giving them something for nothing, thus seeking to induce industry and self-respect.

Public amusements.—Play in our day has taken on an entirely new significance. We find ourselves caught, soul and body, in a vast network of amusements. Many people seem to have gone amusement mad. Our play life has been transformed from the old, simple, inexpensive, home-spun games of the home and the neighborhood to the gigantic, expensive, advertised, commercialized amusements of the present.

And, in view of the fact that the modern highly organized form of business on a vast scale of production made possible by the pooling of enormous capital is now manufacturing everything that we use, our cry for amusement has been heard in Wall Street, and our amusement life

has passed over into the market place. The big captains of industry now sell us amusements as they sell us sugar, decide the brand we can buy, and set the price we shall pay for it. When we want a laugh we put money in the slot, as we do for chewing gum.

The motion-picture industry, having become almost fourth in size in the industrial world, now being conducted chiefly for profits, has raised for the public most serious and menacing moral, social, and economic problems. Large corporations, greedy for profits and often lacking in moral ideals, have done incalculable moral damage to our youth by producing many vicious, suggestive, and morbid pictures, or, possibly worse, by sometimes studiously undermining basic Christian ideals, on which the very structure of civilization rests securely.

Shameful abuses in the industry must be driven out from civilized society before we can be called fully Christian in our life of play. The church is the freest and foremost agent in every community to set the ideal and make the first move against these organized human exploiters. It will not do for the church merely to condemn objectionable forms of amusements; it must endeavor to mold taste, set public opinion, create healthful amusements, and stimulate intelligent control of all amusements offered to the public, or the ideals of our youth bid fair to go to smash before the footlights.

Public education.—Among the most important agencies in the training of the oncoming generations is the institution of the public school. A democratic society composed of worthy personalities presupposes the common diffusion of general knowledge; for knowledge forms a basis for conduct, enriches personality, and broadens the individual's outlook on life.

Through controlled social experiences in the public school the child learns much that is to prove of value to him in his conduct. The decreasing emphasis on home training renders the responsibility of the public school of increasing importance in the training of childhood and youth in the art of successful living.

The public school, in laying the foundation for economic efficiency, is developing one important phase of the char-

acter of childhood; but such efficiency does not include all control and, in the proper evaluation of social relationships, must also be included in the program of the public school.

The Kingdom Ideal Operative in Political Life

The ideal of the Kingdom has thus far scarcely made a dent upon political life. The political spoils system must give place to political service.

Political responsibility.—So long as we need the state we shall have politics and political parties. So long as we strive for democracy we shall have to exercise the ballot. To be a citizen in a free republic is a weighty responsibility. The gravest dangers to a democratic form of government are general indifference and widespread ignorance of political and social problems. Good causes are often lost by the good citizens who fail to go to the polls and cast their ballots intelligently.

While we recognize a traditional separation of church and state, this fact should not blind us to the close relationship existing between them in furthering the common good.

The church, as an institution, cannot enter politics in a partisan manner. The state, as such, cannot invade the domain of the church and say what it shall teach or do in religious matters; but the ideals of the church must find expression in appropriate legislation. The Christian citizen may be expected to further politically whatever is clearly for the common good, such as equal rights for all—the right to be well born, the right to be educated, the right to work and play, the right to a home, and the right to free speech and free contract relations.

The church must see that the state becomes not an end in itself but the agent through which the common good is guaranteed. The state promotes the Kingdom ideal when it legislatively makes it harder for the lawless to do wrong and easier for the righteous to do right; the church promotes the Kingdom ideal in politics when it preaches and teaches the higher ideals of good citizenship; church and state promote the Kingdom ideal when they cooperate in securing and maintaining a high degree of respect for

law and in placing honest and capable men in public office.

World relations.—The tragic issue of our time consists in the sobering fact that the civilized world is in a state of war. Even though the fighting has ceased for a time, statesmen tell us that interclass and international hatred in Europe is as strong as or stronger than it was in 1914.

Our modern world having become a vast neighborhood in its network of trade relationships, travel exchanges, rapid communication, scientific and educational communities, it is urgent that we think and act internationally. It is therefore no longer possible to conduct hundreds of national units on the principles of national selfishness, living in armed dread of each other; we must get at those social tendencies which feed and encourage the war spirit.

One of the most urgent duties of the church is the creation of a world conviction that will end war forever. In the past the church has been rather inconsistent in its attitude toward war: in times of peace it has stressed the fact that war is unchristian, and then, when war has come, the church has emphasized the glories of it. She must take a consistent and uncompromising stand against it; and when war is really outlawed in sentiment, we shall find a warless way of dealing with international difficulties.

The particular method or instrument by which war shall be ended will have to be a matter of experiment, revision, and slow growth; but an honest beginning is due and expected.

The Kingdom Ideal Operative in Industry

No other single issue of modern activity touches life at so many angles and so completely as the life of industry. Millions toil and sweat at the bench and have no other life.

Conditions in modern industry.—The mass of mankind may be divided into two groups: the capitalistic and the working class. Under present conditions most men and women must work either with their hands for wages, with their brains for salary, or make profits on money investment. The wages and salaries are paid by the employers—

capitalists, manufacturers, bankers, and the like—who generally organize themselves into corporations, trust companies, and such, often pooling enormous capital and thus largely owning and controlling the natural resources and securities of the country. This class is relatively small but disproportionately strong.

These two groups, which compose, in the main, the industrial order of our time, need each other. They are compelled to work together to produce and distribute the goods that the consumers must have to live and be comfortable.

But the interests of these two groups inevitably clash. They find it difficult, often impossible, to agree on terms of wages, standards of life, working conditions, length of the working day, rights and conditions of contract labor, and many other things.

The church holds a ministering relation to both groups involved in this vast industrial warfare in the civilized world to-day. It can be neither a silent onlooker nor a partisan with one side or the other. What, then, is the duty of the church? In what measure can it have a part in solving the difficult situation?

The church and the worker.—The church has always meant to be a friend to both worker and employer, but often it has been compelled to act as a big brother to keep peace between the quarreling industrial twins. Since, on the whole, the worker has been the weaker of the twins, he has stood in need of more protection against his aggressive brother.

But why should the church, a purely spiritual institution, interest itself in purely economic problems? She is concerned because human welfare, ideals, and persons are involved.

The standard of living, the number of wholesome luxuries, leisure hours, the kind of associations, education, and recreation the worker and his family can enjoy, are all directly contingent upon the wages he can get, the hours he must put in, and the conditions under which he must work.

If he has less than a living wage he must find a cheap house to shelter him, buy cheap foods, wear poor clothes,

and seek few luxuries if any. His margin of comfort, leisure, and general welfare is cut down to the point of increasing exposure to conditions that make for physical, mental, and moral sag. When the worker is pushed into the slum, as five per cent of the industrial world is, he sinks below the level of decent existence, doomed to the scrapheap, damaged human goods. It is a part of the church's duty to see to it that the worker has guaranteed to him wages and working conditions that will make for the development of human personality.

The church and the employer.—The employer as well as the worker has rights that must be considered if there is to be an adequate solution to the problem. Many employers have the welfare of their employees at heart but find it difficult to improve conditions, because the workers are not willing to compromise in making a start toward the desired goal.

Furthermore, if a single employer, living, as he does, in a vicious economic order, were to change radically his whole system and give the workers everything they demanded, it would spell financial ruin for him, because his peers would unite to crush him. It is only as the employers as a class incorporate Christian ideals into their systems that the worker's demands may be satisfied with any degree of safety to the individual employer.

It is the church's task, then, to consider the point of view of the capitalist as well as that of the laborer.

The church's part in industry.—The church has a large responsibility in helping to arouse the social consciousness that is essential in making industry more human. The church can, in the first place, try to understand sympathetically the present struggle; for it must be understood by those who would help before it can be cured. Then, when its leaders speak or write in regard to these problems, they will do so intelligently.

In the second place, the church must seek to formulate a workable, achievable ideal to be held up to both sides, toward which all must join in working if any industrial system whatever is to succeed. There are at least four factors that such an ideal must contain: (1) The chief aim of industry must be to furnish a kind and

amount of serviceable goods most useful to the whole community. (2) No form or type of industry must be allowed to flourish for private gains which is so conducted as to be detrimental to a large part of the community. (3) The wealth created by industry must be so distributed as to serve the highest possible good of the community, and not of a certain favored group of the community. (4) The human interests and personal safety, comfort, and welfare of the workers must be protected (*a*) by the payment of a minimum wage sufficient to insure a decent living; (*b*) by reasonable security against unemployment, sickness, injury, and old age; (*c*) by fixing upon reasonable and fair working hours and conditions that will afford sufficient leisure for self-improvement and play; and (*d*) by such cooperation in industry as will insure a normal incentive to do efficient and profitable work.

The church, by wise and intelligent teaching and preaching, can do much to stimulate the conscience and crystallize the ideas of men and women until they shall more and more attempt to bring these elements to practical realization in industry as a whole. Such teaching and preaching are a real part of the good news of the kingdom of God and a true phase of the new social order for which we are hoping. Such efforts on the part of the church are both practical and ethical, ideal and real. The ushering in of such a social and economic order would mean the coming of the kingdom of God on earth and the answer to the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth."

The Kingdom Ideal in a Teaching Church

In our day the civilized world has become a firm believer in the power of education. We now know—or, at least, firmly believe—that almost any result can be obtained by the educational control of experience. What we would have in the life of to-morrow we must put into the educational agencies of to-day.

The need of teaching religion.—The true worth of religion is measured by conduct. The present chaotic status

of the world bears witness to the failure of the church and school in producing the desired conduct.

It is becoming more and more difficult to cope with the problem of increasing crime. The modern mind is chloroformed with pleasure-seeking. The commercial slogan runs, "Business is business." "The little nations sit within their boundaries scheming for small advantages, none heeding the general good. . . . It may be that tinkering cannot save the European system now. . . . Perhaps the root is too rotten with self-seeking."[1]

The main causes for this world muddle can be traced to the failure of church and school in the adequate moral training of childhood and youth.

Recently experts have taken children into the laboratory of science and tested their morality. We have been told by these experts that such "tests showed that American schoolchildren will, under temptation, have an unethical outlook on life . . . ; more than this, that under temptation over half of them will act dishonestly. will cheat and lie and steal." These are not agreeable facts to stare us in the face; but they are scientifically obtained by an examination of a cross section of American childhood and youth. And when we recall further that not more than one child in four is actually receiving religious instruction, and that for the short period of twenty-six hours a year, and under generally poorly equipped church teachers, where the meager instruction is Bible-centered rather than pupil-centered, or, in other words, that sixty-two per cent of the population of the country receives no systematic religious education whatever, we can readily see that a huge task confronts us.

"We have made the discovery," says Walter S. Athearn, "that unless children are taught religion they will not be religious. We have also made the discovery that children can be scientifically taught religion in such a way that the course of their entire lives is changed. Our tests prove this beyond any scientific doubt."[2]

"The only way to train a good executive," said Frank D. Gilbreth, internationally famous engineer, "would be

[1] H. G. Wells.
[2] *Good Housekeeping*, February, 1924, page 21.

to begin when he is not more than one year old. If you wait until he is grown, he not only has formed a great variety of bad or wasteful habits, but he resents any effort to change them."[3]

This advice is equally true in making a good Christian or a good citizen or a good anything. The church is only now beginning to see it. The public schools must be made to see that the forming of desirable character is as necessary to successful living as the teaching of reading. No character can be well developed without religious training. But the public school cannot teach religion; the home increasingly does not do it; the church has not succeeded as a religious educator.

The new complexity in modern civilization makes more urgent the need for teaching religion and morality. The church and the public school therefore have as their most solemn obligation and opportunity the duty of developing good character. This obligation stands ahead of all other duties whatsoever. The church should adopt a workable program of religious education and seek the cooperation of all churches and of the public school in making it a community enterprise.

When such a program turns the Sunday school into a children's church, the summer vacation into a vacation church school, the school year into a week-day church school, the home into a religious kindergarten, and the federated church into a training school for teachers and leaders, then we may look for a new soul in youth and downright Christian conduct in economic and social life. Thus, we may hope to build into the structure of young life the spiritual values necessary for a safe and successful civilization.

Educating public opinion.—One of the greatest social forces to-day is public opinion. Very few individuals, if any, can long stand against it. Such a powerful agency, and one that assumes such an important place in society, must be taken into consideration by the church. As soon as public sentiment is in the grip of the church, rather than in the hands of self-seeking economic exploiters, we

[3] *Collier's*, July 21, 1923, page 14.

shall have gone a long way toward the realization of the Kingdom ideal.

It is the church's duty, then, in the face of the many problems that press upon the world to-day, to create a Christian social consciousness on such questions as politics, international and interracial relationships, economics, etc. But the church must see to it that the public opinion it creates does not consist merely in transient, changeable social whims, but in intelligent, educated, stable opinion founded upon a knowledge of social conditions as they really are.

The public must be educated into its opinions if these opinions are to be lasting and forceful. Preaching, teaching, discussion, and the press are all elements in the educational programs, and all are vital factors in the formation of the kind of public opinion that the church should help to create.

The church cannot hope to formulate uniform public opinion but it at least can substitute the fundamental principle of love for that of force, the ideal of service for that of profit, cooperation for competition, and human brotherhood for class hatred in public thinking.

Thought Questions

1. What did Jesus mean by the term "kingdom of God"?
2. What are the conditions for entrance into the Kingdom?
3. What is the effect of commercialized amusements upon character?
4. In the face of commercially controlled amusements what can the church do to render recreational life safe and wholesome?
5. What position should the church take regarding war?
6. How can the church take a definite stand in the industrial struggle in view of the fact that both worker and employer are in the pews?
7. What evidences can you cite that point to the need for a teaching program in the church?

8. Can religion be taught?
9. Why should the church seek to mold public opinion?

Suggested Readings

Report of the Council of Cities of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1921.

What Constitutes a Successful Community Church? Auman, pages 24–30.

The Social Crisis—Can the Church Meet It? Craig, pages 102–10.

The Industrial Crisis—Can the Church Meet It? Beebe, pages 110–17.

The Reconstruction of Religion, Ellwood, Chapter XI.

The Religious Basis of a Better World Order, Newton, Chapter III.

Living Together, McConnell.

The New Program of Religious Education, Betts, Chapters IV, VIII.

CHAPTER XII

THE HOPE OF LIFE ETERNAL

Several millenniums ago Job voiced the age-long question that men always have been asking and are still asking: "If a man die, shall he live *again?*" (Job 14. 14).

A question that has so vexed humanity down through the ages is certainly one that merits full recognition and consideration. It is not a problem that confronts philosophers and theologians only; for these stand wistful, side by side, with the humble and unlettered on the brink of that black abyss of the unseen, to ponder the question "After death—what?"

The Human Claim

Although our actual knowledge concerning life beyond the grave is humblingly meager, our human hope is surprisingly strong. Then why should we not be content to leave the mystery unsolved? We cannot let it alone any more than we can let love alone, because both interests are instinctive.

Growing out of human desire.—Not only does man crave to live on into ripe old age but he yearns to live forever. It is a universal desire born and bred in our human nature. It is a basal instinct with us. It arises as naturally as hunger arises. We have the life habit.

But what has man's instinct to do with the truth of immortality? Nature is not inconsistent. Our human experience shows us that where an instinctive hunger for food exists, as it does, food has been provided to satisfy that hunger. It is probable that we can trust nature to provide equally well to meet the hunger for life eternal. To think otherwise is to impeach the integrity of the universe and to charge the Heart of things with being untrue and faithless.

Growing out of spiritual capacity.—Man, as a creature

of the dust, is incomplete at his best. How immeasurable the heights, depths, and breadths of man's mind! How vast the range of powers lying dormant within the breasts of all of us! Man has found that it is utterly impossible to live out all that is in him in one life. The bounds of this world are far too narrow for him to realize the development of all his powers. Even at his best he has found that it is impossible to lay out his life plans so as to complete them in a single world. He is ever pursuing a fleeting goal. He is always planning for more than he can do; he aims to climb far higher than he can attain unto; in his dreams he sees more than he can ever realize; he is constantly struggling for a degree of success which he cannot here attain—death overtakes him before he reaches his goal.

A short three score years and ten will not permit man to develop to the fullest all the talents and amazing capacities existent within him. He needs a world of broader horizon, a world where life is not limited by time and space, but is allowed, through the countless ages of eternity, to press on with all the vigor of its desires to a higher goal than the one made possible in the mortal body. With such a boundless capacity for development it seems incredible that God would cut man off utterly from even a partial fulfillment by the hand of death.

Growing out of ethical necessity.—Life at best is a hard climb upward, and man has a right to all the strength and encouragement he can get. Take the belief in immortality away from him, and indulgence, dissipation, hatred, and contempt easily follow; his life becomes cramped and dwarfed. But let him think of himself and of his fellow men as immortal, who will live on long after the tallest skyscraper lies in ruins, and the largest city has been laid waste; long after the mountains have been swallowed up in the midst of the sea; after the sun, the moon, and the stars have passed into fire mist: and he begins to sense the unmeasured value of personality. The practice of hatred, selfishness, and injustice becomes more difficult to the believer in eternal life. The practice of love, good will, kindness, and courage becomes easier. Man begins to give of himself freely to his brothers.

Hence, it is seen that this belief in immortality is necessary if men are to have a highly moral universe.

But this is not all. Immortal life is absolutely essential if man's moral life is to reach its completion. The call is to moral and spiritual perfection. This life alone is not adequate to attain it. Besides, millions are not afforded a fair chance to mature. Shall they not have the chance to continue arrested development on the other side of the grave? A God who raised such hopes, to be ended at the grave, would hardly seem just and fair to his children.

The Christian Basis

It is only when we turn to the words and life of Jesus that we get the clearest light and the fullest assurance of life beyond. He confirms the hope and demonstrates the fact of immortality. His own quality of life is a pledge of spiritual continuity. The right quality of life is the best guaranty of quantity. They live most who live best. The good are imperishable.

Future life that consists in mere indolent existence is hardly desirable. The habitually low level on which many are content to exist scarcely entitles them to eternal life at all.

It is significant that Jesus made eternal life a present attainment as well as a future expectation. It is a quality of life which he offered to men in *this* life: "He that believeth on the Son hath eternal life" (John 3. 36); "this is life eternal" (John 17. 3).

Jesus' attitude toward death.—Not only did Jesus raise men's estimate of man and revolutionize men's conception of the character of God but he radically changed men's idea of death—or, at least, tried so to do. He found mankind fearing death and said to them, "Be not afraid of them that kill the body" (Matt. 10. 28). He saw his own people, the Jews, employing hired mourners, who wailed despairingly over their dead, and he said to them, "Weep not; for she is not dead, but sleepeth" (Luke 8. 52). The Roman world, in which Jesus moved wrote over their dead, "*Internem Vale*" ("Eternally Farewell"). Jesus taught his followers to write, "*In spe*," "*In pace*," "*In*

Christo" ("In hope," "In peace," "In Christ"). The pagan worshipers asked eagerly, "After this life—what?" The early Christians in their midst said with Paul, "O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" (1 Cor. 15. 55). It "is swallowed up in victory" (1 Cor. 15. 54). Near our own time John Wesley could say, "Our people die well." There is a polar difference between pagan and Christian views of death.

We modern Christians have not yet been able to rid ourselves fully of the pagan horror of death, although Jesus' treatment of it has very greatly softened that event certain to come to all. Longfellow, the Christian poet, was able to write in his diary the morning after the death of his daughter Lucy: "Last night the angels came, and little Lucy went with them." It is doubtful if he ever wrote anything more beautiful than that sentence nor anything more truly Christian.

"Why should we fear death? It is life's finest form of adventure," said Charles Frohman, the great playwright, as he stood calmly on the deck of the sinking *Lusitania.* Such were his last confident words to a group of friends at the moment when the wild waves were about to suck him under.

What is really at the basis of this changed view of death? It rests upon a changed view of life. Jesus was supremely interested in life, more life, abundant life, a God-filled life, a humanly complete life. Hence, his interest in death was altogether secondary. Death was to him a transition, not a terror; a change, not a fatality; an incident in life, not the end of life. It seemed to Jesus a mere transition from one phase of life to another and a more favorable aspect of living. "He that hath the Son hath the life"—eternal life (1 John 5. 12).

At the same time let us not forget, as some do, that Jesus regarded death as a normal event of human existence, and not as an error of mortal mind; a regular fact of nature, and not a fiction of bad thinking. There is therefore no more reason for denying the reality of death than the reality of birth. If one is a fact, so is the other. If one is a delusion, so must be the other. What we need is to grasp securely Jesus' humanized teaching of death

and to free the event from pagan superstition and gruesomeness. "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (Luke 24. 5).

Jesus' thought of rewards and punishments.—Jesus did not think in terms of legal procedure but, rather, in terms of family life—parents and children. The pagan and, for the most part, Jewish ideas about punishment for sin were those of an angry God (or gods) who drags the dead before his icy tribunal and metes out to them cold justice, as would a Roman court. These ideas have found their way into Christian theology, and God has been pictured as pronouncing judgments of eternal reward for the good and eternal punishment for the bad. Raphael's awful picture "The Last Judgment" describes in gross, material terms, alluring only to a basely vulgarized mind, this conception of God. Upon the basis of this paganized caricature of Christianity our New England Puritan forefathers could solemnly bury unbaptized little children in the "unhallowed burying ground" and consign them to hell in accord with the supposed judgment of God.

How different was this from the treatment which Jesus accorded the subject—that of God the Father and the human family living together! In his life and teaching Jesus amply illustrated this principle of God's fatherly concern for his children. The lost son is at once received, forgiven, and restored on his return home. The thief on the cross is accepted of Jesus on the evidence of a penitent, trustful spirit and assured that he will be with Jesus in paradise that very night. Love, forgive, and pray for your enemy. That, said Jesus, is like God. "Neither do I condemn thee: go thy way; from henceforth sin no more" (John 8. 11), said Jesus to the unchaste woman. That is like God. That is the essential attitude of God to man in this world, and likely is not different in principle in any other world.

On the other hand, Jesus did not present a God indifferent to evil nor overindulgent to sinners. While God does not go about dealing out petty punishments like a police magistrate he nevertheless maintains a spiritual order in which consequences follow given behavior. Man cannot escape the inevitable *results* of sin. Selfishness

takes one to his own place. Jesus pictures Dives in Hades as the same selfish, comfort-seeking, smug, contemptible person that he had been in this life. As Jesus pictures him, one might hear him say: "Send Lazarus to wait on me and minister to my comforts as he once did on earth. What else is Lazarus good for? Send some one from the dead to warn my brethren." He had no thought of doing the missionary work himself. Let all heaven wait on Dives' pleasure. Why should he be expected to do anything? His own devilish disposition, hardened into an incurable selfishness which could see nothing in the universe but his own immediate selfish desires, fixed for him his place in hell. A society of such "rotten rich" would turn any place into a perdition and make it a "place of torment."

Separation from God on account of one's own ungodly disposition and baseness of character constitutes the "great gulf fixed," so that there can be no passing from one to the other. Our quality of character fixes our destiny hereafter, as it does our choice of companionship here on earth. Birds of a feather flock together. The great laws of life judge us. What we are in ourselves fixes for us our final destiny.

Hence, heaven and hell are much more suggestive of different kinds of lives than they are different geographical places to which men go. Heaven, then, in a large measure is a state of mind that craves the eternal fellowship with the highest and best that there is in the universe. And they who are so minded go naturally where such persons are to be found. To the Christian that place is wherever God and Christ are. And that is heaven.

Jesus' witness to the God of the living.—Jesus has given us the most assuring view of God—the God of the living. It was upon the reality, wisdom, goodness, and integrity of God that Jesus planted his confidence. Is not God everywhere present, unrestingly at work, revealing unfailing interest in all things and impartial good will to all his earthly creatures? Does not God feed the birds, clothe the flowers in beauty, send the rain on the just and the unjust, seek the lost, heal the sick, answer the praying, and reward the good?

It is the confidence in the perfect character of God, once we accept the God of Jesus, which assures us that this hope in a life eternal cannot be a taunting mockery of our soul's desire; for it is a persistent desire we have of wanting to live evermore.

Surely we cannot be mistaken in our fullest and best human desires. We crave to see, and there was made for us the open sky. We long to communicate, and there are our organs of speech and hearing. We crave to know, and the world is understandable. There is the heart of love, and there is the opposite sex to answer the heart's desire. There is lying all about us a world order ready to answer our waiting needs.

The great, good God, who has so wisely and amply met our common hungers for bread and books and blossoms, will not fail to provide an appropriate home for the soul whose deepest yearning is to live forever. To think otherwise of God is to impeach both his goodness and wisdom.

A good God would not equip human life with a racial craving for life eternal and fail to provide for its realization. The good God of Jesus would never mock his earthly children by planting within them an abnormal desire or a false craving for something which he did not mean to satisfy. In the long run man can have respect only for a God who keeps faith with him in the best hopes he has planted deep in his nature. Will not the God who made the air for our gasping lungs to breathe make room for the longing soul to live unendingly? To answer in the negative would be to reject the God whom Jesus revealed as our caring Father.

Jesus confidently expected to go to his Father and assured his disciples that they should join him, that where he went they should go. Hence, Jesus summed up his faith in life beyond when he said, "He is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mark 12. 27).

Heaven and hell, then, are hardly empty spaces made ready in advance to receive good and bad people. Good people build their own heaven, and bad people their own hell. And their conditions will be no better nor worse than mankind makes them. Hell is the state of disturbance which disloyalty creates. Heaven is the state of har-

mony which loving obedience makes. If there were no persons in the universe opposing God's will and doing harm to other persons, there would be no hell, there would be only an extended heaven.

The Modern Inquiry

A warmer interest in life beyond has quickened our modern pulses as a result of the recent World War, which caused almost forty millions to "go west." Empty chairs at millions of firesides are causing lonely hearts to ask age-long questions afresh: "Do they still live? Where are they? What is after death? Shall we see them again? Can the psychic mediums give us any message from the other side? Has the Society for Psychical Research found any scientific proofs of the other world?" Such questions are being asked with a fresh insistence. There is a renewed interest in life beyond.

Can we survive our bodies?—Life, not death, is the gateway to the spiritual world. The fuller and richer we live, the surer we can be of immortality.

There are, however, many in our time who find it difficult to retain faith in a future existence of the individual, owing to the fact that personality seems to be utterly dependent on the physical body. Can mind survive the brain? Can consciousness survive decay of the body on which it appears to depend utterly? An adequate discussion of this subject would take us too far afield in so brief a treatise as this must be; but, briefly, it may be suggested that thus far no really valid objection has come forth, either from science or from philosophy, which forbids our believing that personality can survive physical death.

Modern psychologists, who have the best right to speak scientifically on this point, if I mistake not, are fairly well agreed that the fact of consciousness is not to be accounted for merely by adding up the "sum of all physical processes." Can we not stand off at one side and view the brain itself and take note of inner movements? What is this something that persists through all the changing experiences and brain modifications if it is not the nonmaterial self, which we believe to survive the physical

change of death? In the absence of any sure scientific fact offered against the possibility of personality surviving body our Christian hope can stand. And the larger and fuller that life is lived, the stronger is our sense of permanence in life. Where the craving for a certain type of consciousness is in hot pursuit of truth, beauty, and goodness, fullness of life results. It was such a life which could say with confidence, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live; whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11. 25, 26).

Can we communicate with the dead?—Our age is too practical in temper to indulge in riotous speculation about the future life. While people flock with eagerness to hear the mediums, rush to see Conan Doyle's "spirit photographs," or read Sir Oliver Lodge's *Raymond,* and dabble feverishly in nightly seances to catch glimpses of the other world, they nevertheless, on the whole, take what is offered with splendid caution and will not believe all that is told them by those who would make gains of human curiosity and sorrowful yearning to know about their loving dead.

Literally truck loads of books and magazine articles dealing with these phenomena of the other world have been dumped upon the market and are finding ready sales. Professing to give a bewildering mass of testimony, as they do, assuring us that the dead are alive, our age still awaits better evidence than it has yet received. Furthermore, when this mass of material is carefully sifted and evaluated, it becomes fairly clear that nothing of significance is as yet offered us beyond the most ordinary statements such as these: "I am happy." "It is a beautiful place I am in." "I am always near you though you cannot see me." This is only such sentimental, commonplace chatter as anyone might expect would be true of the departed if he believes them still alive.

However, such discouragingly small results from modern efforts to pierce the veil that hides the other world from our view should not turn us against honest and scientific efforts to investigate and to explain many puzzling performances by professional mediums. We cannot say off-

hand that there is nothing in all of these pretended phenomena. Psychical investigation, scientifically conducted, has already explained many of the subtle methods used by spiritists, has confirmed the fact of telepathy as a possible means of communication, and has reduced the field of mystery hitherto referred to extranatural agencies.

The hope of continued existence beyond the grave is as yet a matter of human faith, sanely confirmed in the Bible by Jesus' testimony and personal resurrection. Our faith in the greatness of Jesus and our confidence in the integrity of his God and ours continue to constitute our surest ground for belief in continued personal existence beyond the grave.

In our soberest moments we are likely to come back to the more practical ground of confidence in the superior kind of life which is so lived in time as to be fit for everlasting continuance in another world. Whatever heaven may be, there can be but one sure worthy way to gain it—the way of the heroic fulfillment of earth's duties, of the serene living of the simple, charming, Christlike life, and of a downright purpose to make the most and best of each passing hour in which we live. Our first solemn duty is to learn how to live a full, rich life on earth as the best preparation for life beyond. It is in our earnest striving to make earth like heaven that our own future heaven is made secure and real. Life after this is not to be thought of as set apart from this present life by an impassable wall. This life and the next are one and inseparable. "Life," says Jones, "becomes not a matter of bodily duration but a matter of spiritual vitality."[1] There is a constant emphasis and unmistakable reiteration on the lips of Jesus concerning the investment of life with spiritual fullness and power as the guaranty of sure continuance of life.

Thus, the paramount question becomes one of the *present* life and of its investment with a spiritual fullness and timelessness. Am I alive now to God's vast spiritual order, teeming with love, duty, idealism, sacrifice, goodness, and beauty?

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[1] *Religious Foundations*, Jones, page 136.

What values survive death?—He who succeeded in living most and best once said, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." Did he not mean by this that whosoever lives in his spirit and believes in those imperishable spiritual values and priceless principles of life in which he lived and which he championed shall never die? Is not anyone who possesses such a quality of life really deathless?

How shallow and empty are the lives of those who live only for the passing moment and who depend on immediate gratifications and seek only sensuous satisfactions! Such a tin-basin round of petty existence has nothing to transmit to the other world. The fool in Jesus' parable who said, "Soul, eat, drink, and take thine ease" was a fool because he made the irreparable mistake of trying to feed his immortal soul on things made for the stomach. When he was called and had to leave his earthly things behind him, there was nothing left which he could transfer to a spiritual world. He was eternally bankrupt, because his soul was empty.

On the other hand, Jesus constantly glorified the qualities of love, service, purity, loyalty. These are, in their very nature, qualities that are permanent and eternal. Truth, beauty, courage, goodness, sacrifice, and love never fail. They are bankable in the spiritual world. When we have these we have God; and when these have us, he has us.

Thought Questions

1. How do you account for the universal hope of life beyond?
2. What three natural human considerations support belief in life beyond?
3. Wherein is Jesus' view of death unique from other ancient views?
4. What gave to Jesus such a different view of death?
5. Does the church to-day share Jesus' view of death?
6. How does Jesus' thought of God become a guaranty to life beyond?
7. Have we any solid evidence of communication with the dead?

8. What elements are best fitted to survive beyond the grave?

Suggested Readings

Why I Believe in Religion, Brown, Chapter VI.
The Assurance of Immortality, Fosdick.
Religious Foundations, Jones, Chapter X.

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